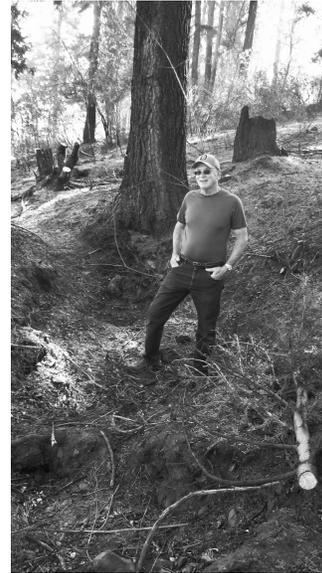


Kittitas Chapter members, Bill and Kris Hall were severely impacted by the 2012 Taylor Bridge Fire in Kittitas County. Their house and barn were just barely spared, primarily because of their defensible space and an aerial retardant drop directly on the house as the blaze swept up the hill out of the Swauk Creek Canyon. They are hands on forest owners and have begun the restoration process.



Bill Hall contemplates how to restore their burned forest

→→→

Here is their story --

Imagine replacing something that would reach over 100 feet high over a steep, rocky slope, capable of withstanding severe winds, raging snow storms, intense heat and draughts, and lasting over 400 years without any maintenance. Then imagine replacing 1,600 of them. In August 2012, the Taylor Bridge Fire stormed through the east side of the Cascades. Over half of our mountaintop 50-acre forest was wiped out. Trees once green and fragrant, were now charcoal statue reminders of the blazing inferno. Unless we reintroduced a lot of new trees, the beauty, habitat and wildlife would be gone for decades.

To plant trees in this terrain, I had to come up with a method doable even on steep, scree slopes. Taking advantage of others experiences, I developed and perfected a planting method that made this daunting task possible.

It started with preparing the hole for the seedling, in my case Ponderosa Pine plugs, started in #10 Styrofoam containers. Sinking a traditional dibble planting bar or clam shovel in our rocky soil would work some of the time; I wanted something better. After looking thru many hardware stores I ended up using a 1-1/4" Irwin Speedbore twist drill and a lightweight lithium battery drill.

I could use a cross mesh to protect the seedling, or go with a more expensive protective tube effective against not only the herbivores, but harsh sun and wind too. I chose a 2' Max Grow protective tube from Tree Protection Supply.

The tree and tube would need to be secured with a stake. I chose to use 1/2" PVC pipe, which I cut into 2-1/2' PVC stakes. These would withstand the environment and flex with the tree in the wind. To drive the stake into the ground I fabricated a driver from a 3' steel bar 1/2" in diameter with a head on one end. I slipped the bar over each PVC stake, pounded the bar into the ground, and pulled the bar out.

Living on the EAST side of the Cascades was my biggest challenge. I used site conditions to plant where soil stayed damp and moisture would collect. I planted

each tree with water. As summer approached and the soil dried, I went from 15 trees watered per gallon of water to 5. Often times I carried the water over scree slopes in milk containers in my backpack. It was a lot of water, but if you're expecting trees to grow over 100 feet high on steep, rocky slopes, withstand severe winds, raging snow storms, intense heat and draughts, and last over 400 years without any more intervention, you can at least offer them a drink!

Now retired, Bill was an engineer for Grant County PUD. Kris is a former biologist who worked for the U.S. Forest Service and state Department of Ecology. They bought their 50 timbered acres in 1996 and fully understood the risks of living in the woods. Their house and barn, perched on a hill above Hidden Valley, sits in the middle of their property. Bill will share his how-to details with other WFFA members. 509-440-2574 or [bill@johnmhall.net](mailto:bill@johnmhall.net)