

“Maupin on the Deschutes”

Before she retired from 21 years of state government work, Sue Knapp spent two years searching for that perfect place to live and decompress. She found what she was looking for in Maupin—a rural community with a river close by, on the east side of the mountains, with sunshine, juniper, and sage. She saw it as a “jewel in the desert,” embracing a river and fish-centric way of life. It was perfect. Not knowing a soul in town, she bought a house on Fishcamp Road and settled in. At the time, her son and daughter thought she was crazy, but they came soon saw the specialness she saw in Maupin. With a sense of civic duty still part of her psyche, and having served in many past leadership roles, Sue quickly got engaged in Maupin life, first serving on the Maupin Budget Committee and then being elected to the Maupin City Council in 2013—a position she continues to hold. She was also later elected to the Board of the White River Health District and currently serves as a Board member for the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District.



In Maupin, Sue also found a wonderful group of women to connect with, including a group of local artists who were instrumental in getting her back into art after a career in science. The Lower Deschutes River Canyon soon became a magnetic attraction and is depicted in nearly all of her paintings. Her artwork matured from simple pen-and-ink drawings to full-blown watercolor pieces. Her fascination with the geology and the landscapes of the area, created from the forces of uplifting, overlaying, and erosion over millennia, is commonly captured in her paintings. She established a business in environmental art: Rivercrest Artworks, and she annually shows her work at the Maupin Market.

Sue enjoys driving up and down the river corridor in her Subaru Forester with her black lab mix, Cali, hiking and collecting rocks, taking photos, starting art pieces, watching for wildlife, and listening to the river. Being on the river is another joy, either paddling her I.K. (inflatable kayak) or rafting with friends. And, as anyone who has driven by her house can attest, she also loves to garden. Sue says that finding and being involved in the Maupin community “is part of my life’s purpose . . . giving back to a community and making a positive difference” through civic engagement, friendships, and art.

As a natural resource biologist, Sue spent nearly her entire career in salmon recovery; it was her “life’s work,” as she puts it. Being in the field for many years and working on such rivers as the Umatilla, Willamette, John Day, Snake, and Columbia, Sue knew that a river had to be part of her life even after the job. Living in Maupin, close to the Wild and Scenic Deschutes River, with an expansive area to explore and amazing river access, is a dream come true. Having been an observant scientist, Sue became an observant and detailed-oriented artist, capturing that sense of place and scenes that most others would overlook. That attribute is reflected in her artwork for the 2019 Maupin Daze poster: “Maupin on the Deschutes.”