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OldSmokeys Newsletter

Newsletter of the Pacific Northwest Forest Service Retirees - Fall 2020



The Historic 2020 Fire Season

Marching smoke front of the Riverside Fire, Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon. Courtesy of USFS Pacific Northwest Region.

President's Message - Steve Ellis

The Pacific Northwest experienced a devastating fire season both on federal and private land throughout the states of Washington and Oregon. In western Oregon we experienced a magnitude of wildfire emergency many have never witnessed. The wind driven wildfires rapidly moved through densely wooded westside forests. These wildfires mimicked the behavior one would expect from fast-moving rangeland wildfires.

Unpredictable and unprecedented, we watched as the wildfires blazed a path of destruction and pain. Tragically, several individuals lost their lives. The fires destroyed people's homes and properties, including those of Forest Service employees and retirees. Many businesses were lost. Communities were rapidly pushed out by mandatory evacuation orders. It was a challenging time.

Personally, I felt awed by the mobilized wildfire response of men and women teaming together to put their skills to work. We praise those who met the wildfires' challenges and thank them for the difficult and exhausting work they did around the clock. And so, we felt it appropriate to focus on this historic fire season and the firefighting response in this edition of our OldSmokeys newsletter.

The articles include the experiences of Forest Service line officers and scientists, a wildfire map, and how the OldSmokeys stepped up to provide financial assistance to employees and retirees who were adversely affected. There are so many stories to be told, that we couldn't fit them all in this one edition. You can anticipate more articles in the winter newsletter edition that share experiences through the lens of victims, firefighters and our partners. Do you have a story that you would like us to follow up on? Please let me know.

I am very proud that the OldSmokeys provided financial assistance through our Elmer Moyer Emergency Relief Fund. A total of \$15,000 has been provided so far to assist those in need. We are grateful for the many individuals and organizations who generously contributed to the fund.

Being there for agency employees and retirees in time of need is what we as OldSmokeys do. I hope you take time to reflect on these historic wildfire events as you read this edition of our newsletter. This issue is dedicated to those around us who worked hard to make us feel secure.

Yours in Service,

Steve

In this Issue...

One Forest's Experience with the 2020 Fire Season.....	3
Fire Models: An interview with fire analyst Rick Stratton.....	8
Pacific Northwest Research Station tackles the science behind 2020's wild season of wildfire.....	11
Soil Burn Severity Maps.....	12-13
2020 Fires in Pictures.....	14
Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund helping out with Covid and Fire needs.....	16
Election: Vote for a new President-Elect.....	17
National Museum's History Corner.....	18
New Members and Memories.....	20
New Scholarship Fund available for students.....	22

One Forest's Experience with the 2020 Fire Season

Interview with Dave Warnack and Tracy Beck, current and former forest supervisors on Oregon's Willamette National Forest

The 2020 fire season was intense and historic across much of the Pacific Northwest, with devastating impacts to communities and loss of life and homes and businesses. Unusually powerful winds pushed widespread fire across the landscape and produced some of the worst air quality the region has experienced... all while we are in the midst of a pandemic.

This article provides a window into how one Forest experienced extraordinary fires. In October, the OldSmokeys editorial team sat down virtually with Dave Warnack and Tracy Beck, current and former forest supervisors on the Willamette National Forest, respectively, to learn about the scope, management, and impact of the four major fires of September.

Calling for back-up

On the morning of September 8, retired forest supervisor Tracy Beck got a phone call. The Willamette needed him back. He'd been retired since the mid March, but four major fires were burning, pushed by unprecedented winds the day before and Dave Warnack, the current forest supervisor, needed his help.

"I needed him as a friend. I needed him as a resource, and I needed him to help me understand the broader context of these fires socially," Dave recalled. Dave had been in the forest supervisor position since April, transferring from the deputy forest supervisor position at Umpqua National Forest.

The scope of the fires was extraordinary. Hurricane force winds pushed the Lionshead Fire over the Cascade Crest on Mt. Jefferson and overtook the town of Detroit. Immediately to the west, the Beachie Creek Fire burned down the Santiam River to Lyons and Mill City. Just to the north, the Riverside Fire was pushed by the winds down the western front to the Clackamas and Molalla river valleys. Farther to the south, the Holiday Farm burned through the McKenzie River valley east of Eugene. In total, those four fires would burn more than 700,000 acres.

Bringing in a retired forest supervisor is an unusual situation and it points to the magnitude of the fires' impact. When Tracy got the call, he dropped everything. Tracy was forest supervisor for five years and the Willamette holds an importance place for him personally and professionally. "I'm always going to be there for the Willamette. Always," he said.

Managing Fires with Agency Administrators

Dave and Tracy explained that the intensity, complexity, and sheer scope of the fires on the Willamette required a high level of coordination and leadership provided through agency administrators, whose role is critical to our modern way of managing incidents.

"There was a real concerted effort to have the horsepower in place to cover the agency administrator duties really well for the teams," Tracy observed.

For example, the two horrible fires that blew off the Santiam and McKenzie river canyons, along with the Lionshead fire rolling over the Cascade Crest at the same time were way too much for one person to handle. Dave



Clockwise from top left: Current Forest Supervisor for the Willamette Dave Warnack, OldSmokeys board member Becki Heath, OldSmokeys board president Steve Ellis, and recently retired Forest Supervisor Tracy Beck.

called on Tracy for assistance, and also called down Eric Watrud, another advanced agency administrator from the Umatilla NF. Eric and District Ranger Darren Cross took on duties for the Holiday Farm Fire on the McKenzie River, and Dave and Deputy Forest Supervisor Duane Bishop concentrated on the Beachie Creek Fire on the Santiam. Meanwhile, Holly Jewkes, Deschutes NF Forest Supervisor, and Nikki Swanson, Sweet Home District Ranger, took on agency administrator duties for the Lionshead Fire.

“We knew there were hundreds of structures lost and even some lives lost. Dave was there the night the incident command post got burnt over and had to evacuate,” Tracy said. “Dave was dealing with that trauma in the middle of regrouping in Salem to get a foothold on the fire. Luckily the wind quit ripping to the West at 70 miles per hour.”

Having several agency administrators was crucial in managing the complexity of fires burning on just one Forest. An agency administrator is the person who delegates authority to an incident commander and the team to manage suppression actions on the Forest's behalf. They are involved with the daily plans of an incident management team and how that team carries out objectives.

There are different certification levels for agency administrators, from an entry level through a journey level and advanced. Last year, the system was changed so those certification levels are now determined by a regional forester based on certifiable experience and training. These certifications are now using a task book like the rest of the IQCS system to capture the learning and the training that a person has had. Dave's certification level is advanced

administrator.

“The way that I look at it is this: When I'm an agency administrator and I order up a Type 2 team with a Type 2 incident commander, I have certain expectations about how that team operates and the type of complexity that team can take on,” Dave explained. “I feel the same way about the teams when they are working for an agency administrator. They should expect a certain level of competence from their agency administrator. I really support this change, and I think it helps balance out the expectations and insures that the people making decisions about people's safety have the requisite amount of experience and trainings to make sound decisions.”

The way the fire behavior actually played out was so far beyond what we expected and what our models had been telling us.
- Dave Warnack

A sobering assessment flight

Between the Lionshead Fire that came across from Warm Springs, east of the Cascade Crest, and the Beachie Creek and Holiday Farm fires, more than 205,000 acres of the Willamette National Forest burned. That equals 12% of the forest acreage, but is just a small fraction of the overall 700,000-acre footprint of the fires that included other lands administered by the BLM or State or in private ownership.

Dave and his team are still trying to understand how the fires have impacted different land allocations, like how many acres were in wilderness and matrix lands, how sales and planning areas have been impacted, as well as impacts on the Willamette's broader program of work.

Dave had an opportunity to fly in a fixed wing to survey the aftermath. “My initial flight was a little sobering,” he said. “We've all fought fire on the West side for a number of years. And we all have looked at resulting burn intensity



Suppression effort on the Lions Head Fire, Willamette National Forest, Oregon. Courtesy of USFS Pacific Northwest Region.

maps and have been happily surprised that there was only 2% to 7% of high severity burn. In past years, it wasn't all bad. But the flight that I took over Riverside Fire, Beachie Creek, Lionshead, and Holiday Farm, it told a different story. There is a relatively high percentage of high severity burn across each of those fires."

Dave saw many areas considered mosaic and other areas that will need to be studied in terms of the way the fire jumped from ridge to ridge. Some of the drainage bottoms were hardly burned in some areas. The burned area emergency response assessment (BAER) was launched and will provide some insight on the impacts of the fires.

Editor's Note: The subsequent BAER maps provided after our interview, shown on pages 12 and 13, show that high severity burn ranged from 9% to 12%, with moderate burn averaging near 50% coverage.

Unexpected fire behavior

The fire behavior itself will also be studied. "Who would have ever imagined the Lionshead fire jumping the Cascade Crest and roaring down the other side, burning through the Whitewater Fire that just burned in 2017 like it wasn't even there," Tracy said.

Fire modeling was pushed to its limits. Modelers had to really max out parameters. "The way the fire behavior actually played out was so far beyond what we expected and what our models had been telling us," Dave explained. "It really reflects the type of weather system and the type of preconditions that were out there. It was so much more than what all of our tools were telling us to expect. I've never seen anything like it." *More in depth discussion of fire modeling can be found in "Fire Models: An interview with analyst Rick Stratton" on page 8.*

An Open Letter to the Willamette employees from Forest Supervisor Dave Warnack, Sep. 24, 2020

I hope all of you are finding some time to catch your breath after receiving some welcome rain. The rain is such a fundamental part of our lives – this year in particular – and it's so nice to feel its return.

Like many of us, I've been trying to process the events of the past month – playing and replaying certain things, searching for understanding, and thinking about the future. All I can say for certain is that we were a part of something historic.

I can also say for certain that you were here for each other - you were fighting fire unsupported with a skeleton crew for days on end on the east side of Holiday Farm fire; you were evacuating Detroit during the middle of the night; you were evacuating ICP in Gates only to reconfigure in Stayton and then again in Salem; you were sweeping the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness on Labor Day Weekend; you were guarding road closures; you were chasing potential looters; you were fielding calls from all quarters in dispatch; you were having high stakes conversations and making sound decisions; you were sheltering displaced employees at other Ranger Stations; you were taking all of my calls at the SORO; you were building employee support networks and standing up CISM teams; you were reaching out to colleagues for emotional support; you were opening your doors to displaced colleagues; you were making sure that people got paid; you were filling orders and making

sure firefighters got supplies; you were managing social media accounts to share public info on the fly; you were reaching out to our partners and purchasers to share information and concern; you were ensuring that our business practices were in order; you were working with other organizations to build unity of effort and solidify relationships; you were building our FY21 budget and POW so that we didn't drop important work; you were forming think tanks to consider future management options; you were dusting yourselves off and getting back into the effort; you were providing leadership when needed and taking direction when needed; you were leading with your hearts and your heads; you were backfilling each other on days off; you were doing these things and many more things seen and unseen.

When you look back on this years from now, you can say that you were here, you did these things, and you rose to the occasion. Please know that I'm here for all of you for the long run.

Thank you very much,
Dave

Editor's Note: Dave shared this email with OldSmokeys in hopes of illuminating some of the incredible ways people rose the occasion.

Displaced employees coming together

At one point 145 of the 400 employees of Willamette National Forest were displaced by the fires. And while this was happening to people on the Willamette, it was also happening to people on the Mount Hood and the Umpqua. “That’s what I mean when I talk about the scope,” Dave said. “This happened to the people of Oregon, and the people of Oregon are some of our people, too.”

In one example, people were evacuating to both sides of the mountain from the Detroit Ranger Station. A caravan traveling east to Deschutes was warmly received by the Deschutes National Forest. “We called their leadership, Holly Jewkes, Ian Reed, Val King, and Kevin Larkin, and they were waiting for our people at the ranger station that night with sleeping bags and food and a place to stay. That’s incredible - that is shelter in a storm,” Dave recalled. The people traveling west out of Detroit, regrouped at three in the morning at the Costco parking lot in Salem, made a total accounting of everyone to make sure nobody was missing, and dispersed for the night.

“As you would expect, our employees are strong and they’re resilient and they want to get back into the effort as quickly as possible,” said Dave. He and Tracy recalled stories from all corners of the region about people doing just that. One employee actually lost their home and got out with only their work bag. And they were thankful for having that work bag so they could do payroll and make sure employees got paid.

“That’s just incredible,” Dave said. “People have been displaced, they’ve been impacted, but I really believe that we’re doing our best to take care of them and they’re doing their best to help out in meaningful ways.”

Some of those displaced employees are working a full public information section, others stood up an employee support network where their sole program of work is assembling all of the support resources available, from the Red Cross to FEMA. Another set of employees are looking at the future to understand the changed condition on the landscape. “They’re all doing a fantastic job,” said Dave.

To help with assistance, a national group called Operation Care and Recovery was on scene almost immediately, led by the Region 6 representative Eric Walker, who is the deputy forest supervisor on the Okanogan-Wenatchee. Operation Care and Recovery is multi-fold effort addressing immediate needs and more long-term recovery issues. The group helps address employees’ needs like temporary housing and critical incident stress management (CISM). More long-term, they look broadly at leveraging

the goodwill and effective coordination with other agencies that happened in the suppression effort into the recovery effort. For example, they are looking at large BAER efforts coordinated across the landscape to address danger tree mitigation. They are helping to coordinate jurisdictions in sharing a common set of objectives, a common prescription, and a common funding apparatus to do the necessary treatments along the transportation system.

Working together across jurisdictions

Not only did Dave and Tracy see the Willamette employees leaning on each other and adjacent Forests stepping up to help, but people came together across multiple jurisdictions in a new way.

“I’ve seen agencies work together in ways that I’ve never seen before,” Dave said. “Early on people really did understand that this was so much beyond any one jurisdiction.” The National Forests were working with the Oregon Department of Forestry, the BLM, and office of the State Fire Marshall in a seamless way. Another important component was industry and private landowners and how they were able to integrate into the team operations and the framework of incident response.

“There weren’t the normal rubs that often happen during multiple jurisdiction fires. We found a way to talk through differences in support of a common end state. We all agreed that the end state is what matters and we found ways to achieve that,” Dave said.

Tracy also noted the involvement and participation of local and state elected officials. Oregon Congressmen Peter DeFazio and Curt Schrader and many county commissioners were present throughout, at cooperator meetings, learning about what communities needed, and working to help get it to them.

COVID and Air Quality concerns

On top of managing extraordinary widespread fires, the Pacific Northwest was also dealing with a pandemic and some of the worst air quality on record.

COVID-19 was a huge concern for the Forest Service going into the 2020 fire season. The agency convened a team of high-level risk managers and operations managers, to think about the disease in terms of risk. They determined if fire camps and incidents were run as normal, it was going to lead to a lot of transmission and possibly deaths. “The agency put together some specific mitigations and they are working,” Dave said. “People aren’t even getting camp crud.” Within the incidents of Holiday Farm, Beachie Creek, Lionshead, and Riverside, no positive cases of

COVID-19 were reported.

“At the field level we've received amazing support from our organization,” Dave reported. “Every time a good idea has come from a local unit, it has found its way to the national level, like the issue of paying for tests.”

Air quality during the massive fires was also a big concern for the agency. Incident management teams coordinated with local county health officials and developed assessment criteria to help mitigate potential impacts to incident teams. In some cases, teams overnighted in motels or dormitories instead of camping to get fresh air at least while they are sleeping.

Both Dave and Tracy expressed a long-term hope of exponentially increasing prescribed fire programs, especially in the urban interface, to prevent such widespread air quality issues.

Could the magnitude of the fires have been prevented?

A lot of questions are being asked nationally if more active forest management could have halted the progression of these fires. Both of these career forestry professionals question if any pre-treatment could have had an effect on slowing these fires. “These fires blew

across private industrial forest lands, the most heavily managed lands around, and they didn't stop the fires,” Tracy said.

“It is difficult to judge our traditional management against this type of fire behavior and weather system,” Dave offered.

Both concluded that they are eager to see what is learned from these fires and how the different types of management treatments may have influenced fire behavior.

Calling in back-up – the right call

Reflecting back on whether calling in Tracy as reinforcement was a good decision, Dave said at one point during the fires someone from outside of Region 6 asked him if it was strange to have his predecessor there. “Who else would I want to be here?” Dave told them. “He knows this place inside and out. I trust Tracy Beck and I need that counsel right now. I need somebody to stand with me, to hold this workforce up during something effecting so many people.”

Dave concluded it was the best decision, “The scope and the scale of these fires was huge and having Tracy there was really important.”

Facilities Damage Report

Detroit Ranger Station

The ranger station building is undamaged, but has some internal smoke issues. Smart work by the Prineville Hot Shots saved it from the flames. Four homes and four administrative facilities were burned.

McKenzie Ranger Station

The ranger station building is undamaged. Telecommunications infrastructure is damaged, along with some housing and outbuildings. Forest leaders are still trying to understand how the loss of housing will impact work there and the surrounding communities.

Blue River (former ranger station)

Blue River area was hit hard. The Forest Service hasn't had any property there for some time. The

former Blue River station and several outbuildings were burned to the ground. The school was undamaged and everyone was excited about that. The rest of it is a total loss, as seen in the news.

Fish Lake Mountain Station

This facility that has received significant investment of time and funding from the OldSmokeys was not near the fires and is okay.

Breitenbush Area

Seventy-one recreational residences were lost. The Hot Springs Lodge and some of the cabins were saved.

Note: The Forest is still completing a full assessment of loss and damage.

Fire Models: An interview with analyst Rick Stratton

The OldSmokeys editorial team sat down with fire analyst Rick Stratton to gain a better understanding of the science behind the September 2020 fires. We covered a variety of topics and found Rick to be a great communicator of complicated subject matter.

Rick Stratton is a fire analyst working for the National Office of the U.S. Forest Service. In that role, Rick has several areas of emphasis. He provides fire modeling and analysis of weather, fire behavior, and movement, to individuals, forests and incident command teams on some of the long duration fires. He is part of the risk management assistance group, providing analytics that help coordinate responses in the field. In 2020, Rick assisted more than 65 different fires with their risk management analytics needs. He also teaches, and helps with decision support development, applied risk assessment, some home destruction assessments, as well as fuel treatment analysis and design.

How is modeled fire behavior information used in fire management decisions? Can you help us demystifying fire behavior modeling and how area commanders use the information?

Basically, people want to know where the fire is going to go, how big it is going to get, and what things we care about that it is going to impact. Fire analysts help bridge that gap between where the fire is right now and where it could potentially go. Typically, modelers receive updated information about a fire in the evening and work to provide information for the next day's activities. In these extremely dynamic environments, analysts try to show spatially how the weather, terrain, and fuels will influence fire behavior.

We use a system called Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) as the primary tool to help managers make strategic and tactical decisions during an active incident. It is also the system that tracks and documents fires and the decisions made in managing fires as the official record and informs future management.

On a fire, we conduct short- and long-term analyses—usually an FBAN (the short-term fire behavior analyst) and the LTAN (long-term fire analyst).

Think of a car's low beams and high beams. The FBAN is looking straight ahead, real close at the firefighter safety for that day or two. What is the weather and fire behavior for that day in relation to the operational response. It's discussed at the morning briefing and disseminated to the crews. The LTAN, the high beams, looks further down the road. They're looking out anywhere from three to 14 days, sometimes doing long term assessments out a month or to the season's end. That's really where I do the bulk of my work—long duration fire support.

Ecologists have said that with climate change, we can expect the dry forest regimes to move west and north, and that we should not expect to see the same forest types return with time after wildfires. What do you see could happen in Oregon and Washington, as a result of your experience?

I've given this a lot of thought and I've been observing different things for quite a while. But having said that, my entire firsthand experience is only 10 years, which is a blink in the eye of a system like this.

If you look back into the data you start to see trends however. What the data says is our fire seasons are a little longer - sometimes starting a little earlier, sometimes lasting a little later. And while we're in them, they are hotter. Technically, the term is the energy



Clockwise from top left: OldSmokeys board members Rob Mangold and Becki Heath, Forest Service fire analyst Rick Stratton, and Region 6 media officer Steve Baker.

release component (ERC). The ERC values, which is the amount of heat released at the flaming front of fire, are recording higher values and staying high longer than seen in previous decades.

There are a lot of different things that make management of fires difficult with this kind of a scenario of longer, hotter fire seasons, but one of them is that we potentially could have high, very high, and extreme fire behavior conditions, a little longer on the landscape. That creates more exposure to the potential for wind events, like the one we had.

The wind event in Oregon was very rare. A big front was coming down from Canada at the same time a big low was out in the Pacific, producing extremely high winds. The winds moved down through Washington, went out on the coast in Oregon, and further south into California.

We are used to seeing big fire movement in southwest Oregon on the Rogue River-Siskiyou NF and in the Medford BLM district. But now we're starting to see a transition onto the Umpqua NF. This year we saw the potential of it on the Mount Hood NF, as well as the Willamette NF.

As we do fire simulation work across the United States we are seeing a change, and it is especially apparent in PNW. In the last 15 years, simulated large fire burn probabilities are roughly two to three times higher—based on a discussion I had with Joe Scott (with Pyrologix).

Managing fires is already difficult and it's becoming trickier because of the changing conditions we're experiencing and the amount of people who are now living in the wildland environment.

We knew the winds were coming. How strong it was in places was a surprise and the resulting fire behavior far surpassed what people thought would occur. We had that warning and our weather prediction is getting better and better. We're starting to have high confidence in the prediction for the next one to three days. That's a wonderful asset to have. We have great partnerships with meteorologists at the National Weather Service and at universities. It's then just getting that information, disseminated out to everybody, the private sector, the public sector and helping them understand what it could mean in relation to a fire on the landscape.

I think we've seen some of our largest fires, but I do not think we've seen our most destructive.

Looking at the maps, in Oregon for example, we can see that vast acreages have burned, and in some areas two or more times in the past decade. What do these burned area patterns mean for future fires?

Are there conditions when fuel treatments are not effective? Site-specific fuels treatments that were done to lessen the intensity of the wildfire, lessen the spotting, reducing the rate of spread in a wildland urban environment, I'm sure had a site-specific effect. On the broader landscape scale, are those small fuels treatments making a difference in checking fire spread and altering

it? No, because the fire was so big. That's what we've learned from simulation modeling and from observing fires on the landscape the past 20 years. To be able to modify and check the spread and intensity of big fires, it has to encounter other recent big fires, or really big fuels treatments, and a matrix of fuels treatments, or it just goes right through them.

An example that we saw this year was the Lionshead Fire eventually slamming into the rear of the Beachie Creek Fire and it stopped. You've got to have big, recent, large fires, and it's delicate to talk about this kind of thing right now. But with time we will see benefit of these large fires on the landscape and protecting some of these things we care about from future large fire movement. But, unfortunately, we experienced this at such a massive, destructive scale.

We see a mosaic of burn intensities in these fires, even when it seems like the entire thing is a moonscape. A total moonscape is very rarely the case, because of the terrain, weather, fuel moistures, and the fuels generally. There is a mosaic of burn patterns and we'll have areas that will thrive from this. It's just unfortunate and heartbreaking that it burned where people are living and there was loss of life and property.

I looked at the burn severity maps for each one of the fires, and I thought I would see more red, high intensity burn. I was surprised that there was a lot more moderate and low intensity burn than I had anticipated. (*Note: See Burn Severity Maps on pages 12 and 13.*)

When we talk about the future, some think it could get worse. What does that look like?

I think we've seen some of our largest fires, but I do not think we've seen our most destructive. We've got to take some precautions. We're seeing big fires move into places where you don't usually see fires move. We're

living in a fire environment and need to do things like make our homes ignition resistant. If you look back on this year's fires, we had a lot of fire on the landscape and this big wind event. What if we would have had two or three of those wind events? What if they would have lasted several days or been a back to back event? Think of what could have happened—fire potentially into Gresham/Portland, Salem, Roseburg, and Eugene—but all at once. That's the kind of 1910 thing that we all really fear. And we were just a day or two away from that. Although this was absolutely ugly and heartbreaking and tragic, it could have been a lot worse and I'm glad it wasn't.

Is the answer more prescribed burning?

The last thing any of us want to talk about is more fire and more smoke after something like this. We have successfully suppressed fires for a century and I often wonder how the system would have responded if we would've managed it a little differently. On the West side we still have a very strong suppression response and need to protect values at risk. But there are other places where we need to do much larger prescribed burns and manage fires differently—for benefit to the resource, risk reduction from future fires, and fire response in a safer location and where the probability of success is higher. Over the past few years there has been a shift in attitudes and there is more social license for prescribed burning. The harder question is, are they at the scale we need them to be to make a difference.

In some places, where there have been large fires over the past 20 years, we're starting to see the system self-regulate a little, like on the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF. Big fires are bumping into each other and it starts to

alter the sizes and intensity. I think we will start to see this in southwest Oregon, as well.

Most of Oregon is a fire environment. We've learned that if conditions are extreme enough anywhere, folks can be at risk where vegetation is close to those things we care about. It's going to be hard for a while. And unfortunately, in my view, the only way out of this is through it. We can't go around it.

The only way we're going to potentially be successful is if we address issues collectively, with private industry, with people at the city, county, state, and federal levels together.

Do you think any policy changes are going to happen or are we steady as she goes right now from the national level?

In regard to policy and management of fires, I feel like the policy is ahead of us. We have the policies in place that enable us to do what we need to do. We just need to be able to do it. That wasn't always that case, but in my opinion, it is now. The fire problem is massive and it's very difficult.

The Forest Service is a mighty organization, but this problem is so much bigger than what we can tackle. The only way we're going to potentially be successful is if we address issues collectively, with private industry, with people at the city, county, state, and federal levels together.

Is there anything more you want to share with us that you think would be relevant for our retiree community?

We're seeing a lot of people retiring at the peak of their career in fire. They have a reservoir of experience and knowledge that could still be leveraged to help their local community, as well as the press, understand why things are happening the way they are. My hope is that each of us stay engaged and find ways to help the community we live in, in relation to fire management. Retirees have so much to offer.

The Forest Ranger QUITTING TIME

The fire guard stood on the lookout,
The ranger stood on the ground;
Said the fire guard to the ranger,
Do we quit when the sun goes down?
No, no, said the forest ranger,
We work until it's dark.

If that is the case, said the fire guard,
I'll take my time and start.
I'll travel the wide world over,
I'll roan from town to town,
Until I find a forest ranger
Who will quit when the sun goes down.

*From The Forest Ranger and Other Verse, 1919 By John D Guthrie
Courtesy of Dave Stack at the National Museum of Forest Service History*

Pacific Northwest Research Station tackles the science behind 2020's wild season of wildfire

By Rachel White, Pacific Northwest Research Station

An aerial photograph showing a city, likely Portland, Oregon, with a dense residential area in the foreground and a city skyline in the distance. The sky is filled with a thick layer of smoke or haze, suggesting a wildfire event. The overall tone is somber and urgent.

Labor Day (Sept. 7) 2020 came in with hot, dry, easterly winds that reached hurricane levels. These gusts fanned wildfires across California, Oregon, and Washington into record-breaking megafires that threatened suburbs and compromised air quality in cities like Portland, Oregon, shown here. Photo by Ted Timmons.

Labor Day (Sept. 7) 2020 brought with it a storm that knocked out power to more than 100,000 people in the Pacific Northwest. Fanned by hot, dry, easterly winds that reached hurricane levels, many wildfires that had started in August exploded, burning 1.5 million acres and spurring widespread evacuation orders in quiet suburbs that were taken by surprise.

What happened? Was this just another fluke in a year that seemed to bring a conveyor belt of bad news? Or do Pacific Northwest residents need to adjust to a “new normal” for wildfires and the resulting poor air quality from smoke? Employees of the Pacific Northwest (PNW) Research Station were glued to the news as numerous fires encroached on nearby communities. Some had to evacuate, some prepared to evacuate, and some got to work almost immediately to begin studying the causes and effects of these devastating fires.

The station had already shown a remarkable and almost spooky sense of foresight a couple years earlier by launching the West-Side Fire Research Initiative. The initiative is dedicated to understanding wildfire behavior in the western parts of Oregon and Washington, and how it differs from more familiar wildfire behavior in the closely studied, disturbance-prone eastern portions of these states.

The West-Side Fire Research Initiative arose in 2018 out of growing concern for exactly the scenario that came to

reality in 2020. Long-held perceptions that rainy, west-side landscapes were immune to wildfire were beginning to wear thin.

PNW Research Station findings over the past decades has helped raise the alarm. We know that the forests of the western Cascade Range historically burned very infrequently because of relatively short fire seasons and the wetness of these lush rainforests. Although fires did happen, conditions had to be exactly right for them to start, and they were very rare and tended to be large and stand replacing.

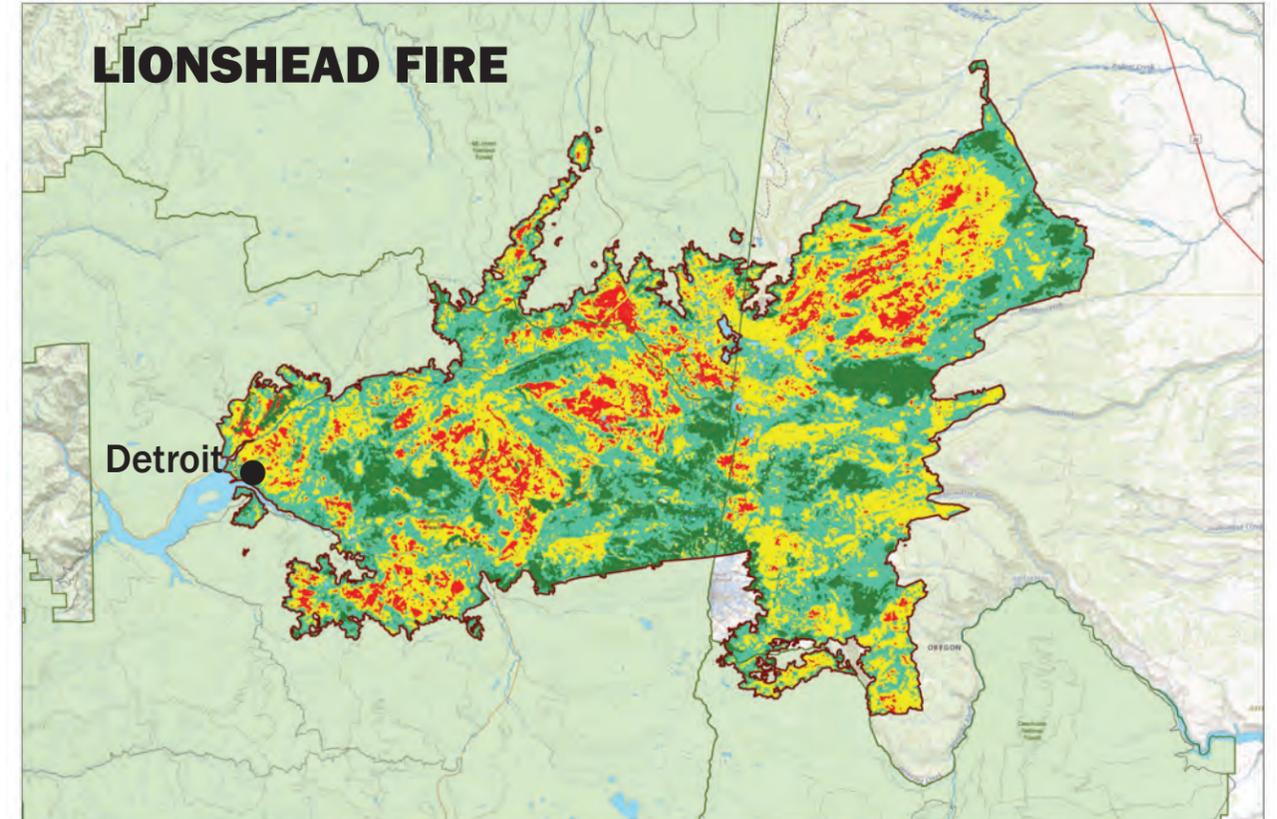
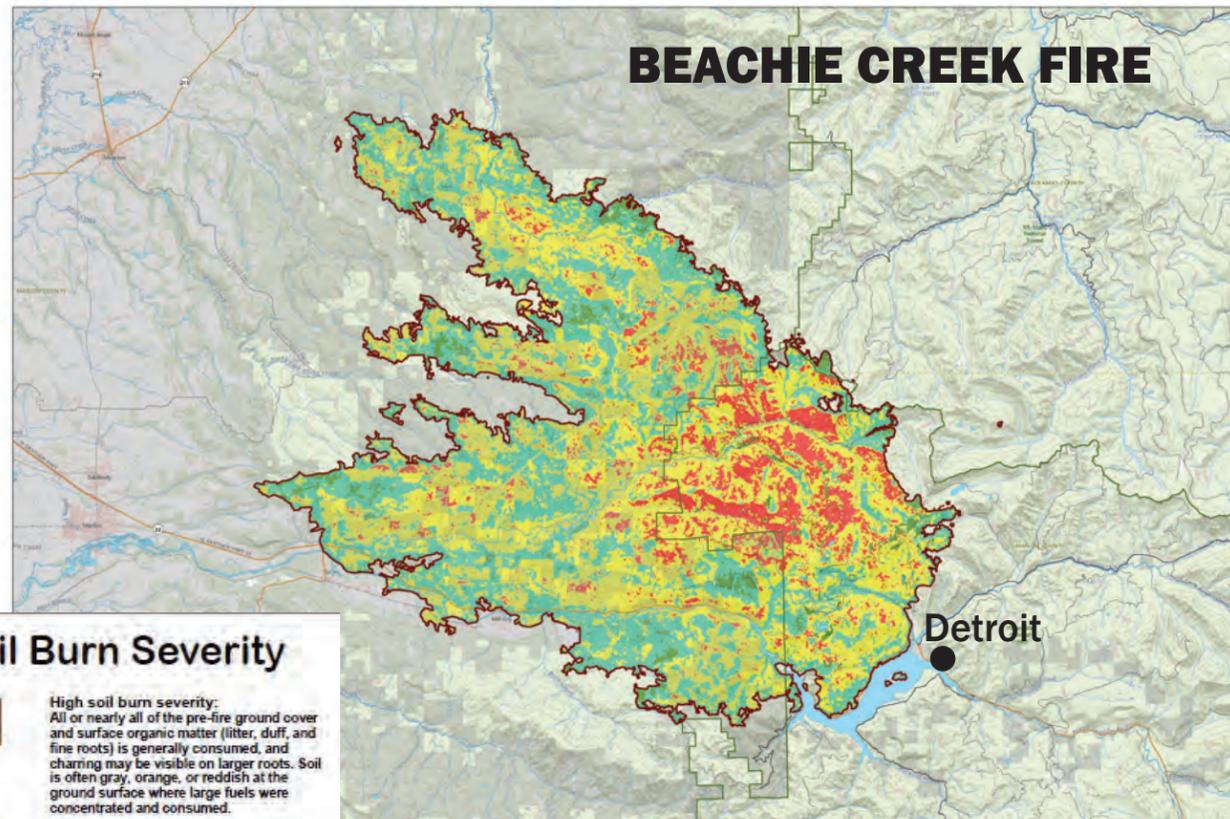
However, according to research by station scientists Dave W. Peterson and Becky Kerns, over the past two decades, the length of fire seasons has increased, and warm dry conditions have become more common in Pacific Northwest forests. While the probability of wildfires on the west side is still lower than on the east side, wildfire risk and the magnitude of consequences of a very large fire event are high, as 2020 tragically showed, especially in wildland-urban interface areas.

Wind was a big factor this year, clearly. Brian Potter, a research meteorologist with the station, has launched a study as part of the West-Side Fire Research Initiative that looks specifically at the wind events that can drive fire behavior in southwest Oregon. Air flowing onshore from

RESEARCH continued on page 15

SOIL BURN SEVERITY MAPS

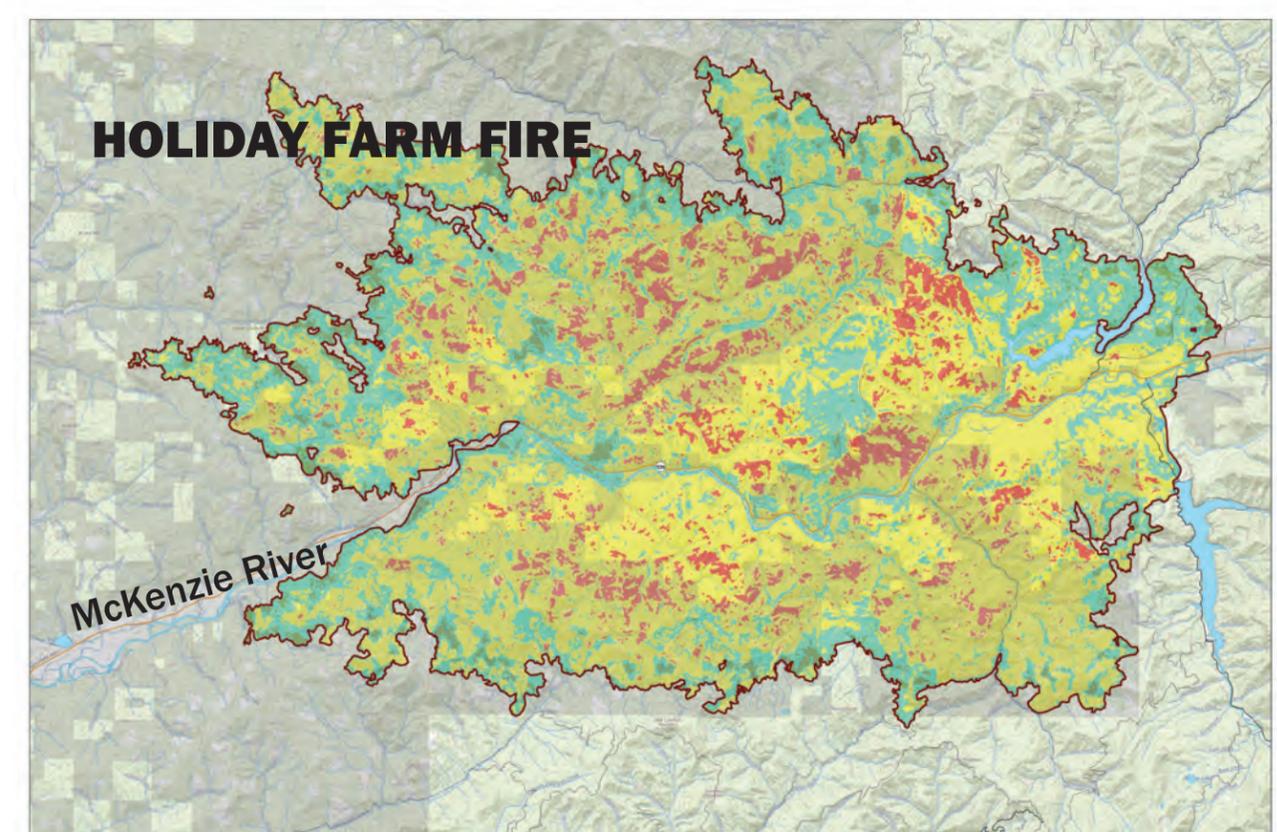
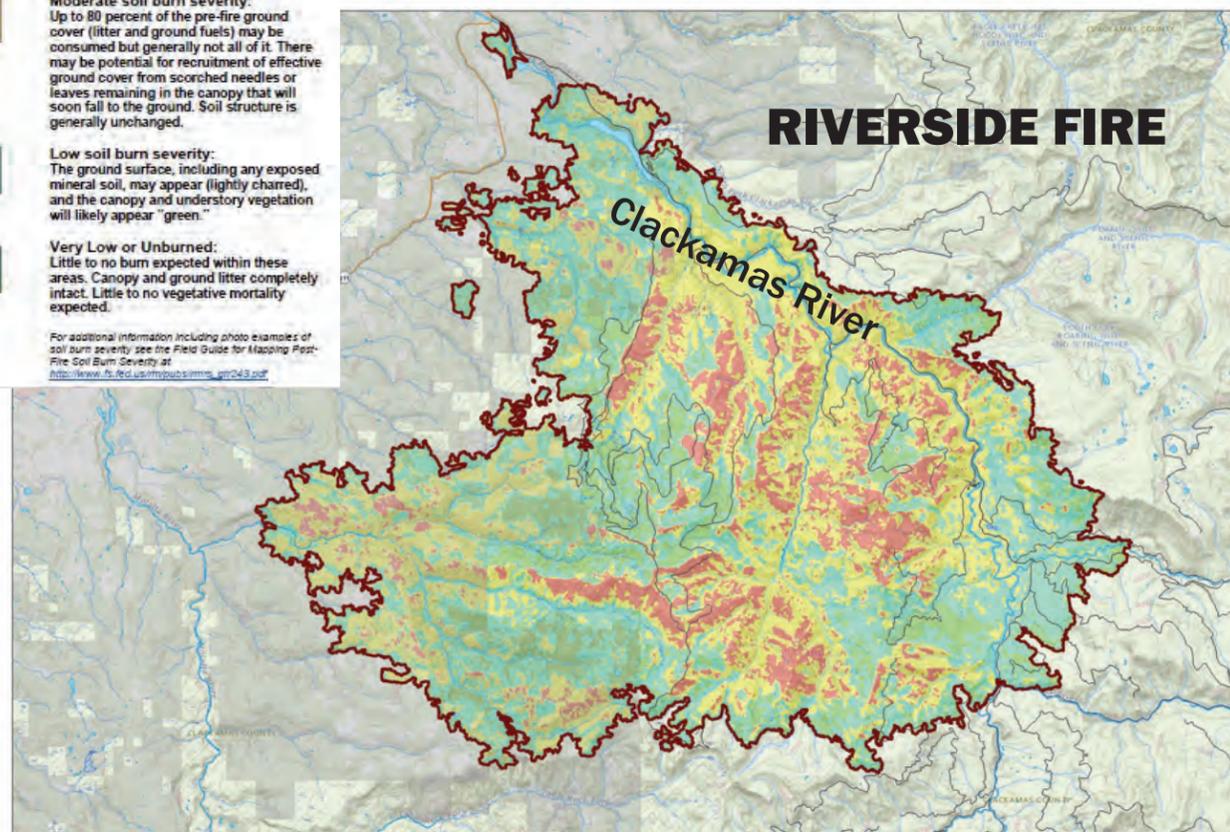
Burned Area Emergency Response, US Forest Service



Soil Burn Severity

-  **High soil burn severity:**
All or nearly all of the pre-fire ground cover and surface organic matter (litter, duff, and fine roots) is generally consumed, and charring may be visible on larger roots. Soil is often gray, orange, or reddish at the ground surface where large fuels were concentrated and consumed.
-  **Moderate soil burn severity:**
Up to 80 percent of the pre-fire ground cover (litter and ground fuels) may be consumed but generally not all of it. There may be potential for recruitment of effective ground cover from scorched needles or leaves remaining in the canopy that will soon fall to the ground. Soil structure is generally unchanged.
-  **Low soil burn severity:**
The ground surface, including any exposed mineral soil, may appear (lightly charred), and the canopy and understory vegetation will likely appear "green."
-  **Very Low or Unburned:**
Little to no burn expected within these areas. Canopy and ground litter completely intact. Little to no vegetative mortality expected.

For additional information including photo examples of soil burn severity see the Field Guide for Mapping Post-Fire Soil Burn Severity at http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/immr_gm043.pdf

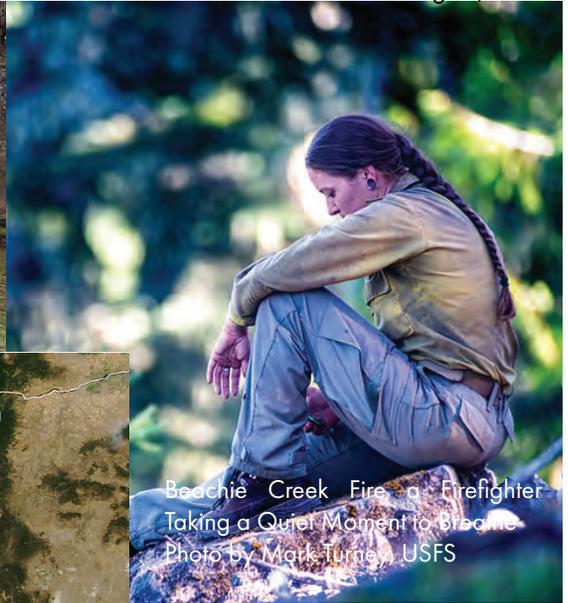


2020 Fires in Pictures

Pacific Northwest Region, USFS



A few government houses for seasonal employees were lost in the Riverside Fire.



Beachie Creek Fire, a Firefighter Taking a Quiet Moment to Breathe
Photo by Mark Turney, USFS



Holiday Farm Fire, mopping up



Satellite image of the widespread smoke



Big Hollow Fire, Drone



Beachie Creek Fire Firefighters Surveying Fire Willamette National Forest
Photo by Mark Turney, USFS



Holiday Farm Fire



Sunstrip Campground along Hwy 224 after Riverside Fire.



Holiday Farm Fire, sharpening the blade.

the Pacific Ocean along the Oregon coast has historically complicated fire management in this part of the state. These situations, known as “marine layer events,” are particularly challenging in the Umpqua, Rogue, and Chetco River drainages.

“Forecasting the marine layer is a long-standing and fire-relevant challenge,” said Potter. “Along the West Coast, and specifically in southwest Oregon, marine-influenced air flowing onshore during wildfires significantly modifies fire behavior. The cooler, moister marine air reduces fire spread rate and intensity. However, no two marine layer events are the same, and the depth, extent, duration, and daily variability of any particular event are crucial to the development of fire management strategies and resource deployment.”

Potter’s study involves setting up weather monitors along the Rogue River drainage to get a finger on the pulse of the marine layer: Where will it go? How long will it stay? How deep will it be? His project is a crucial first step in understanding this complex three-dimensional problem.

The locations of the new monitors were determined primarily by collaborators from the National Forest System’s Pacific Northwest Region and other study members, who will also provide input into how the study data can best meet their needs. The immediate impact of his work will be increased confidence and precision in observing when and where the marine layer is influencing a fire.

The West-Side Fire Research Initiative provides a powerful opportunity to stitch together projects such as Potter’s into useful tools for land managers. The potential future of large, west-side fires will be determined by complex interactions of vegetation, weather, and human population patterns. The tools from



Marine-influenced air flowing onshore during wildfires significantly complicates fire management on the east side of the Cascade Range. One Pacific Northwest Research Station study involves setting up weather monitors along the Rogue River drainage to get a finger on the pulse of these marine events as a first step in understanding this complex three-dimensional problem. USDA Forest Service photo/Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest

the initiative will be crucial to how managers prepare and respond.

Some of the other research underway is addressing additional information requests from land managers, such as better understanding of historical fire regimes in west-side forests, evaluating future fire regimes, understanding hazardous fuels management by landowners, examining post-fire vegetation dynamics (live and dead), and implications for potential future fire behavior.

The forests and communities of the West side present a complicated patchwork of biophysical, socioeconomic, and jurisdictional environments. The initiative’s integrated studies encompass the ecological and social sciences, and will ultimately help fire managers and responders plan for what the future holds.

They also will improve our chances of protecting landscape resilience, mitigating socioeconomic impacts, and coordinating a safe and effective wildfire response in west-side forests.

OldSmokeys News

Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund - 2020 a Challenging Year

By Kurt Wiedenmann

In 2011, the Board of Directors of the Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association (PNWFSA) established a fund that could be used to help OldSmokeys or current employees during an emergency or crisis situation. In 2012, the Board of Directors unanimously approved renaming the fund to recognize the late OldSmokey Elmer Moyer for his contributions to the association.

“Elmer was an unrecognized, yet very effective member of the PNWFSA leadership team,” said OldSmokey John Marker in recommending the change. He helped shape it into the organization it is today.” Elmer was instrumental in establishing the 501(c)(3) non-profit status for the PNWFSA. The fund was renamed the Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund.

Elmer Moyer had a long and distinguished career with the Forest Service beginning 1963 and retiring in 1988. Over his career, Elmer worked in Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Washington DC, and lastly in Oregon working at the PNW Forest and Range Experiment Station in Portland.

The purpose of the Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund is to provide immediate financial assistance to members of the Region 6 and PNW Research family, (retirees and current employees) who are in financial need due to an unfortunate event. The Board of Directors established that an unfortunate event could be from a catastrophic illness or death, or a catastrophic loss of property from fire, wind, flood, or earthquake. Since the fund's inception in 2011, including 2020, OldSmokeys has given out over \$22,000 to 37 of the Forest Service family in need.

2020 has been a challenging year for all of us and it has resulted in several of the Forest Service family in financial need. In the spring, OldSmokeys spread the

word that if any of the Forest Service family were having financial hardships due to the Covid-19 pandemic, that they could request aid. OldSmokeys had two requests from active employees that we were able to respond to with financial aid.

With the historic fire events that occurred in September, many of the Forest Service family lost their homes and personal belongings. OldSmokeys coordinated with regional leadership to get word out that we have a fund to help those in need. We also used our network of OldSmokeys area representatives to get the word out, particularly for Forest Service retirees that had been affected. We have had 19 requests for assistance, and we have provided \$15,000 in financial aid so far this fall.

It has been difficult to hear of the struggles that members of our Forest Service family have experienced, particularly since so many of them lost their homes and belongings. However, it has been heartwarming to read and hear the “thank you’s” from those that received aid from OldSmokeys.

A very unexpected surprise for the Board of Directors was the response to our request for donations to the Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund. Fearing that we would quickly deplete our fund due to incoming requests, we put out a request for donations to our membership. We raised over \$24,000 that we are using to respond to requests for those affected by these fires. And we expect additional requests in the coming months as those affected may continue to struggle to get re-established.

The Board of Directors wishes to thank all those OldSmokeys and others who have donated to the Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund. Everyone's generosity makes us all proud to be part of the Forest Service Family!

Election News: Please vote for new President-Elect

The Board of Directors of the Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association is excited to nominate former forest supervisor of the Willamette National Forest, Tracy Beck, to the position of President-Elect. The Board enthusiastically endorsed Tracy's nomination for the position and is putting it to the members for a vote.

Please use the ballot below to support Tracy's acceptance of this three-year commitment (one year each as: president-elect, President, immediate past-president), or write in a candidate of your choice.

Tracy Beck, of Eugene, Oregon, retired in March 2020 from a 40-year career in the U.S. Forest Service. His last assignment was a five-year position as Forest Supervisor on the Willamette National Forest, where he built and nurtured relationships within the agency and worked in close collaboration with the public, Tribal government, interest groups, and state and local authorities.

Prior to the Willamette, Tracy was the Assistant Director of Natural Resources for Region 6, providing leadership for the vegetation management, vegetation ecology, native plant and special forest products program areas.

Tracy has a wealth of experience in managing natural resources and people in both line and staff positions. He served in positions at the district and regional level in Regions 4, 6, 9 and 10 involving forest planning, forestry, and fire, with many special assignments including acting Forest Supervisor of the Fremont-Winema and acting Director of Recreation, Lands, and Minerals in Region 6.

Tracy served as the District Ranger for more than seven years in Blackduck, Minn., on the Chippewa National Forest. In his early years, he worked on the Lowell Ranger District in 1987 and '88. Tracy has a BS in Forest Management from the University of Montana.

Tracy and his wife, Jan, have been married for more than 32 years and have two daughters, one being born at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eugene. Beck enjoys playing hockey, hunting, fishing, hiking, climbing and running. He has been a member of OldSmokeys since 2017.

Prepared from multiple sources, including an April 2, 2015, USFS press release announcing his position as Forest Supervisor.

Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association Fall 2020 Ballot for Election of PNWFSA President-Elect Tracy Beck

The PNWFSA Board of Directors has nominated **Tracy Beck** to serve as PNWFSA President-Elect for the 2021 term. Please confirm your support of this nomination by casting this ballot for this nominee or nominate a "write-in" candidate.

_____ I cast my ballot for Tracy Beck to serve as PNWFSA President-Elect.

_____ I cast my ballot for _____ to serve as PNWFSA President-Elect.

Mail your ballot to:
**PNWFSA
P.O. Box 5583
Portland, Oregon 97228**

Or cast your ballot by e-mail addressed to
PNWFSA Secretary Deb Warren at
debwarren69@gmail.com

Note: PNWFSA's website does not yet have an online voting feature, so please use paper ballot or email.

National Museum's History Corner



Pioneer Ranger Family at Dale, Oregon, Umatilla National Forest

On June 3, 1911, Charles Fredrick Groom and Etta Estes were married in Lewiston, Idaho. Fred had obtained work for the summer as a Forest Ranger at Dale, Oregon, on the Whitman National Forest. He was an experienced woodsman and camp cook, whereas Etta knew nothing about camp life. They went by train to Pendleton, Oregon, and there purchased a saddle for Etta, a pack saddle, blankets and other equipment for their forest life, taking these by stage coach to Bridge Creek Flats about 10 miles from Ukiah, Oregon.

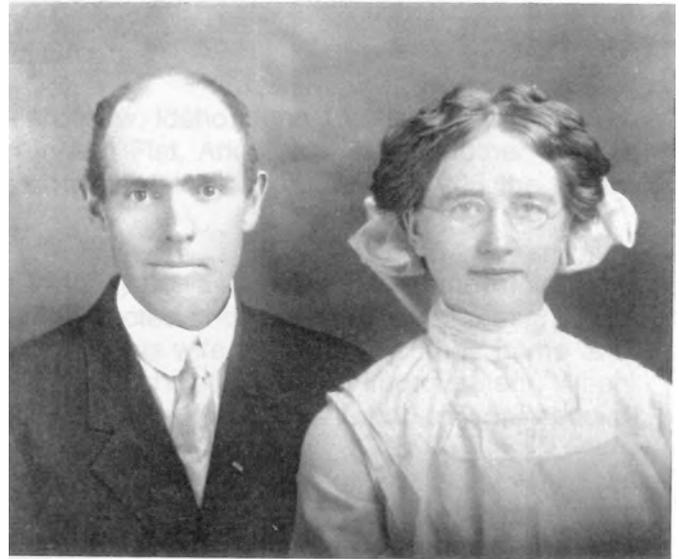
The county road leading to Dale, Ritter, Long Creek and John Day was very crude. Mail was carried by stagecoach in summer, by sled in winter, and sometimes by packhorse. There were no other roads on the Dale District, and not many trails. The horses were Kelly, very gentle for Etta to ride, Splinter, not so gentle, for Fred, and Nancy Lee, the pack horse, strong and able to carry a heavy load, consisting of the complete camp outfit, working equipment and food for several weeks.

Food supplies consisted mostly of potatoes, rice, navy beans, flour, sugar, salt, ham to go with the beans, bacon, butter, eggs, canned Carnation milk, and oatmeal. Cooking utensils were the very minimum. An ax, shovel and rifle were other essentials.

There were many streams on this District and fish were plentiful. In season grouse and pheasant added variety to the food supply. Also, when there was 'open season' in autumn there was venison from which corned venison, mincemeat, and jerky were made.

The packhorse when loaded had a saddlebag on each side, blankets over the top and a tarpaulin on top of all to protect from dust and weather. A long rope tied in a "diamond hitch" secured the entire pack. The tarpaulin also served to protect a bed since there was no tent. The "tarp" was long enough to go underneath and over the top. Fir boughs made a soft foundation.

Starting the trip with a steep, rocky zigzag road down to the North Fork of the John Day River the distance traveled was about five miles in going one mile. Dale Post Office was about 1-1/2 miles from the John Day



Charles Fredrick Groom and Etta Estes

River on Meadow Creek. Barney Shults had a general store with supplies that might be used by campers. One corner of the store was the Post Office, and living quarters were in the back. This was on the way to Kelsey Meadows, about eight miles into the forest, which would be headquarters for the summer. Home there was a small cabin about 10 by 15 feet with a bed and table built onto the wall, two small benches to sit on, and a small, old cook stove. This cabin was on the edge of a beautiful meadow surrounded by tall Ponderosa Pine trees.

There were no big fires that summer, so Fred and Etta traveled over the entire District and became well acquainted with several ranchers. In late September seven other Forest Rangers came to help build a cabin and barn at Dale Ranger Station at the forks of the John Day River and Desolation Creek. I. E. Jones was construction boss.

They built a small 2-room house. It had a small kitchen complete with dining table and benches, a small cook stove and cupboards. The living room was also the sleeping room and had a small heating stove, a bed, table and benches. A well was dug near the kitchen door and a pitcher pump installed. A cool cellar was dug in the hill behind the cabin, and a small "out-house" was built about half way between the cabin and the barn. Baths were

taken in the wash tub, and many times by going into a cold mountain stream, sometimes breaking ice to get a refreshing bath.

In late November Fred went to Sumpter, Oregon, and took the Federal Examination for Rangers. Etta stayed with Maggie Banks while Fred was away. His practical experience served him well. He passed the examination and became a regular Forest Ranger assigned to the Dale District with full-time employment.

Fred and Etta's son, Jack, was born at Dale Ranger Station. Etta had never had a gun in her hands before. Now she was taught the care and use of a rifle. This was useful a few years later when the weather was hot and dry. Rattlesnakes lived in the rocky cliffs above Dale Ranger Station and would come down to the river for water. Etta felt a special responsibility to protect her young son playing in the yard. She soon learned that if a rattler is startled it lifts its head up six or eight inches and looks. Many were the rattlers that lost their heads around the Dale Ranger

Many changes came about for Etta. Very soon she had discarded her long black divided skirt for a pair of boy's bib overalls. She had done home cooking for several years, but had no knowledge or skill in camp cooking, so she learned to cook and to do everything in making camp from packing a horse to mastering the "Diamond Hitch." Many times Fred left early for his work on telephone



Dale Ranger Station

lines or trails and Etta would clear the camp, saddle and pack things on the horse, and follow to where Fred was working. In the afternoon she would go on ahead and make camp for the night and have supper about ready when he arrived.

On one such trip, Fred was working with an assistant Ranger and they had a long day's work, arriving about 10 o'clock at night. Etta had everything ready for supper--even pheasant breasts from the pheasants she had shot along the trail.

Written by Etta
September 1978

OldSmokeys Logo Hat

Show your Old Smokeys membership with this tough, high quality hat. The OldSmokeys logo is embroidered, so it won't wear off over time.

You may order one or two hats per order online for \$13.00 each by going to <https://oldsmokeys.org/Sys/Store/Products/9438>.

The \$13 charge includes a \$3.00 shipping charge (Hat \$10.00 + \$3.00 shipping)

Or, you may order any number of hats by emailing Bob Williams at store@oldsmokeys.org. In the email, tell Bob the number of hats you wish to order and where to ship them. For orders of one or two hats, the charge will be \$13.00 per hat (includes \$3.00 shipping). For orders of three or more hats, the charge will be \$10.00 per hat plus actual shipping cost. Bob will email you back with instructions to send him a check for the hats plus shipping.



Welcome New Members

Welcome to these new OldSmokeys who have joined the Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association since the Summer 2020 OldSmokeys Newsletter went to press:

Jim Champ of Dufur Oregon. Jim was on the Clackamas Ranger District of the Mt. Hood NF in silviculture (Reforestation & TSI) and information management (TRI system). In retirement, he is doing fire hazard reduction for himself and friends, building trails, and doing odd jobs for neighbors. He's also "doing what I always wanted to do since I was a kid" - reading books on science, philosophy, politics, history, and religion, and enjoying a quite peaceful life on oak-pine ridge & foothills east of Mt. Hood.

Jim and Janet Fierst of Spokane, Washington. Jim's career was as a silviculturist on the Umpqua NF. Prior to that he was on the Colville NF. He and his wife are enjoying family and the great outdoors in retirement.

Debra and Craig Gutierrez of Pendleton, Oregon. Debra is an administrative officer and budget officer on the Umatilla NF. Previously, she was a budget analyst and also worked in support services. Her career started in 1988. They, too, are enjoying the great outdoors - cycling, camping, hiking - and spending time with family.

Heather McFarland of Sherwood, Oregon. Heather is the granddaughter of CB McFarland, Forest Guard & Ranger of the Willamette National Forest from 1909 -1946. She joins OldSmokeys because she is writing a book about the early days of the forest service and would love access to our newsletters.

Debbie and Bruce Hollen of Happy Valley, Oregon. Deb is currently working as the Director for State and Private Forestry for Region 6 and 10. In the past, she has worked as a fisheries biologist first on the Mt. Hood, and then on the

Gifford Pinchot. She's also been a District Resource Staff officer, and the Assistant Director for Natural Resources in the Regional Office. She also spent five years working for BLM in Alaska, and five years working for BPA in Washington.

Matt Mawhirter and Autumn Grose of Vancouver, Washington. Matt is currently the Gifford Pinchot Heritage Program Manager. While not working, he enjoys wood working, learning new skills, and all sorts of crafty things.

Karen and Bill Menke of Springfield, Oregon. Karen and Bill are both Forest Service retirees and started their careers in the 1970s. Karen started in 1972 as a clerk-typist on the Okanogan NF and retired in 2009 from the Willamette NF in civil engineering. Bill started in 1973 at the duty station at Diamond Lake on the Tokatee RD and retired in 2015 as a logging systems specialist. He is currently working as an AD Logistics Chief for a Type 2 IMT. They both enjoy traveling and staying active.

Deb Voltz of Corvallis, Oregon. Deb worked in the Chief Information Office in the Washington Office in operations & service delivery, and as hosting support services branch chief. Right now she is enjoying family, genealogy, stained glass, fishing and kayaking.

Darcy and Matt Weseman of Weston, Oregon. Darcy is the public affairs officer on the Umatilla NF. Her entire career has been in the Blue Mountains. She is still working, and in the off hours she coaches highschool and youth basketball in Athena-Weston.

Memories

Farewell to these recently-deceased Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association members who live on in our memories

Anita Gail Leach passed on September 7, 2020 in Mill City, Oregon. She was born on January 4, 1955 in San Luis Obispo, California to Charles and Doris (Manis) Swanson. She attended Humboldt State University where she graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in



Forest Management in 1978. Anita worked as a seasonal employee on the Ochoco National Forest in Hines, Oregon until accepting a professional forester job on the Detroit Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest. She worked there in several capacities including silviculture, fire and fuels management, and wildlife. For most of her career she served as an

Environmental Planner. Anita left the Forest Service for four years to be a grant writer and teacher for North Santiam School District. She returned to the Forest Service and worked on the Sweet Home Ranger District until retirement in 2016 and a total career of 30 years. She continued to work as a member of a fire overhead team after retirement and would have been involved with the current fires in the Santiam Canyon had her health allowed.

Anita met Dave Leach in 1977 while they both worked for the Forest Service in Hines, Oregon. They were married the next year in Reno, Nevada. Dave and Anita transferred to the Willamette National Forest and settled in Mill City in 1979. In 1983 they welcomed Andrew into the world and two years later, Alice.

Anita was an avid volunteer and organizer. Because of her work, she received many awards and accolades, including induction into the Santiam Canyon "Hall of Fame," Mill City 1st Citizen, and numerous U.S. Forest Service Superior Achievement Awards.

Anita was a 26 year survivor of cancer, 13 years of those after it returned. She endured surgery, radiation and nine different chemotherapy treatments. During that borrowed time, she saw her children grow to adults and three grandchildren come into the world. She lived several lifetimes in those years. On the day she died we evacuated our home as Mill City was caught in the Santiam Fire. Our house was spared but many others were not. If Anita was here, she would be working on the fire and afterwards she would undoubtedly have given her time selflessly to the recovery. Due to the COVID pandemic and ongoing fire situation, no memorial service is currently pending. When things are more sorted out, if anyone wishes to donate to fire recovery in the local area in Anita's name, our family would be extremely grateful.

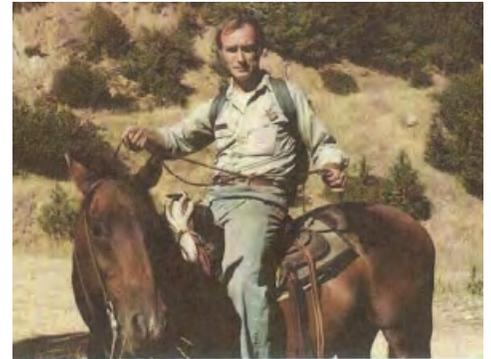
Lavell (Pete) Stanger died in April 2018. *(Editor's Note: OldSmokeys was recently informed by his wife Peggy of Pete's passing. No obituary is available, but we were able to gather some information about Pete from Peggy and friends Ralph Jaszowski, Charles Krebs, and Walt Knapp.)*

Pete retired from the Region 6 State and Private Forestry section in Portland, Oregon. Prior to that he was in the Silviculture Section in Timber Management at the Regional Office, having transferred there from the Brookings RD Siskiyou NF. He was on the Siuslaw NF before that.

Pete was a great handyman, knowing how to repair all kinds of things. Pete loved working on diesel engines and restoring Moto Guzzi motorcycles. He frequently tore down and reconstructed the engine in his Mercedes. He was an avid deer hunter. Pete was extremely energetic. He completely built his own house in Brookings while stationed there. Pete had a boat licensed and rigged for commercial fishing and had his daughter licensed to work as a helper on the boat. He graduated from Purdue University in Forestry.

Bengt (Ben) Hamner passed away September 14, 2020, after a

courageous battle with Alzheimer's. He was polite, kind, and respectful to the very end, often thanking all that were caring for him.



Bengt was born on September 20, 1933 in Williamsport, Penn. He graduated from high school in 1952 and relocated to Ellensburg, Wash., where he worked as a summer fire lookout. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corp in 1953, during the Korean Conflict. After serving three years, he used the G.I. Bill to put himself through forestry school. The U.S. Forest Service was Bengt's career passion. He worked for the agency for 50 years, retiring in 2007. After starting out in timber management, he moved on to lands and mineral and finished his career in land acquisition.

Bengt was happiest when spending time in the mountains around Southern Oregon and had many adventures backpacking and hiking in the Pacific Northwest. He is survived by three children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

OldSmokey Jerry Wojack shares, "I knew and work with Ben while on the Applegate Ranger District. Ben was fun to work with, and I enjoyed being able to discuss projects with him. Especially the wilderness hikes that the staff went on with Ben and Marlega for team building and project discussions. Ben was always the cool and deliberate one in all of our project planning discussions."

Shela Toler, 87, died July 23, 2020 at the Salem Hospital in Oregon from complications after a fall in her home earlier that month. She was born in White Sulphur Springs, W.V. She and her husband, Bert Toler, moved to Dallas, Ore., in 1989 after his retirement from the U.S. Forest Service. They had been married 60 years, before his death in 2012. Bert worked on various districts in the Pacific Northwest, including as district ranger in Skykomish, Washington, on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Shela was a retired artist and was a member of the Watercolor Society of Oregon, the Northwest Watercolor Society, and the United Methodist Church. During her career, she sold more than 7,000 paintings. She is survived by three children, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.



Editor's Note: Thank you to Shela's daughter Kay Bertrand for sharing her obituary.

Helen Johnson, wife of life member Ron Johnson, passed away on September 24, 2020, after suffering severe head trauma from a fall in Hillsboro, Oregon. Helen passed peacefully at 6 am after all methods to save her failed. The Family held a service at Skyline Memorial Gardens and an open house to accommodate well wishers. Ron and Helen had been married 62 years at the time of accident.



Helen Marie Johnson was born on January 15, 1939. Helen is survived by her husband Ronald Johnson; her daughters Karlene Thompson (and family) and Karmen Flatin (and family); her brother Ned Trautman (And family) and nephew Greg Trautman. Helen had four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Helen touched many lives and enjoyed being involved in her local community. She served for many years in various volunteer groups. Through her volunteer activities she developed many long lasting close friendships. Above all Helen loved her family, friends and her community and she will be deeply missed.

OldSmokeys News

OldSmokeys Scholarship Fund – applications accepted until Feb 15, 2021

By Linda Goodman

One of the things I valued most working for the Forest Service was the outstanding people I worked with and got to know. The Forest Service is an organization with heart and I was so happy to see how the OldSmokeys translated that into helping retirees, employees, and work on the national forests. This newsletter is all about helping our friends who have had devastating loses because of the unprecedented fires in Oregon. The Elmer Moyer Memorial Fund has been helping employees throughout the region as you have seen here in this newsletter.

Now we want to help in another way. The Board has established the OldSmokey's (PNWFSA) Scholarship Fund. Patterned after the successful program of the

Rocky Mountaineers, we have set up a permanent college scholarship fund to assist deserving students who are directly related to current OldSmokey members or are endorsed by an OldSmokey member. The OldSmokeys are dedicated to supporting the many avenues of natural resource careers and to the development of promising young people. You will be hearing more about the process since we will be accepting applications for it until February 15, 2021, for our first application process. We want to award \$1500 stipends to deserving students.

To learn more about the application process or to donate, please go to the OldSmokeys website at www.oldsmokeys.org/scholarship.

OldSmokeys 2020 Membership Meeting

By Susan Triplett

The Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association is registered as a 501(c)(3) organization (In other words: a nonprofit organization). One of the requirements of this is that we have an annual membership meeting. We have been doing this every year at our Spring Banquet when we install our new officers.

This year, because of the pandemic, we were not able to have our Spring Banquet. And we weren't able to have our annual Summer Picnic. Although technology cannot replace a live meeting where we get to visit and interact with each other, our leadership team decided to have a virtual meeting on Zoom. The meeting was held on Friday, October 16, 2020. 37 members participated in the call.

Steve Ellis, our president, started the meeting with an overview of how we've adapted to the necessary changes of social distancing, and our use of the Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund to help employees and retirees who have suffered problems due to fires, deaths and other tragedies.

Kurt Weidenmann, our Grant Committee Chair, gave an update on the Emergency Fund donations and uses.

Dick Bennett, our Treasurer, gave a report on our income and donations.

Glenn Casamassa, the Region 6 Regional Forester, gave a talk about how the Region has dealt with the pandemic, fires, and safety issues for our employees and our communities. He then discussed working with the PNW Research Station to develop a comprehensive forest management plan. With the recent extreme weather events, the Region has developed a long-term approach to manage and care for employees and for landscape recovery.

Paul Anderson, the Acting PNW Research Station Director, talked about the establishment of the Northwest National Resources Forum – a shared stewardship to enable the Federal and State organizations to work together. The Station is emphasizing the need for safety for our employees and the public during this pandemic. The Station's "Mission Critical" plan defines our research vs. FS mission-at-large, assesses risk, and is implementing the Forest Information Analysis. Current Fire Research is looking into carbon and urban dynamics.

It was a very fun and interesting meeting!



Grantee visit at Fish Lake

OldSmokeys (L-R) Doug Macdonald, Jose Linares and Steve Ellis at the historic Fish Lake Remount Depot, Willamette National Forest where they had an outdoor field visit in June, hosted by the "Friends of Fish Lake" organization. PNWFSA grant money and member volunteer hours have helped maintain this remarkable facility during recent years. The small group in attendance focused on keeping social distancing that cool, wet morning!



Pacific Northwest Forest Service
Association
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Portland, OR 97228-5583
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Address Changes? Please let PNWFSA know. A few weeks delay can result in not getting your newsletter.

Note: Your mailing label shows your next membership renewal date. For example, if it shows 1/1/2022, your next dues payment is due on that date. If you are a lifetime member, it will show "Lifetime".

**Given the COVID-19 Pandemic,
Lunch at
The Old Spaghetti Factory
for December 2020
IS CANCELLED!**

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