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OldSmokeys Newsletter

Newsletter of the Pacific Northwest Forest Service Retirees - Winter 2021



Snowshoe Trail in Winter, Willamette National Forest, Oregon. Courtesy of USFS Pacific Northwest Region

President's Message - Steve Ellis

It has been a year since we had to unexpectedly and dramatically alter the way we live. Most of those changes are still part of our daily routines as COVID-19 touched us all. In addition to the worst pandemic of modern times, we were also all affected by an historic wildfire season, political turmoil, and extreme weather. It was quite a year!

My heartfelt sympathies go to those who lost family and friends. And to those who continue to suffer from the ill effects of this virus, I wish for a speedy return to full health. We all envision the day when life returns to a more normal course.

We are devoting a portion of this newsletter to focusing on a year of living with the coronavirus pandemic and how we have carried on. We are highlighting how some of our Region 6 colleagues successfully managed to keep things going in these challenging times. One article describes how the Deschutes National Forest met this challenge and maintained employee well-being and public safety. Another article highlights the process created to protect firefighters in the COVID-19 environment. Both stories showcase how employees managed successfully in environments where the only constant was the constantly shifting virus knowledge base.

My hat is off to the employees whose dedication and work in the field did not cease in the face of an unknown danger. They adeptly pivoted their approach and created solutions that surely saved lives and provided necessary services. I am grateful that our organization was able to support them and fellow retirees during such a challenging time. OldSmokeys has awarded over \$18,000 in immediate financial aid to current and retired Forest Service employees for wildfire and COVID-19 related relief over the last twelve months. We remain committed to keeping the Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund available to those of the Forest Service family who have emergency needs now and into the future.

I see more challenges ahead and feel good knowing we have learned so much from the many lessons in 2020. In 2021 we are seeing this new knowledge used to forge a stronger environmental and social legacy. It's a time for rebuilding. All signs are pointing to spring, pursuing unfinished hopes, and a new purpose together.

Yours in Service,

Steve

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A National, Localized Approach to Care for Employees, Communities, and Landscapes

Interview with Erick Walker, Region 6 Operation Care & Recovery Team Lead

Covid-19 dominated many of the headlines in 2020, yet there were also other natural disasters across the nation. Spring flooding in the Midwest and Southeast. A hurricane season the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported as having “the second highest-number of hurricanes on record.” Extreme fire weather that burned 10.3 million acres. No part of the country was untouched, which is why the U.S. Forest Service launched Operation Care and Recovery.

In January, the OldSmokeys editorial team chatted with Erick Walker, the inaugural Operation Care and Recovery team lead for Region 6, to learn more about how this program supported employees and their families affected by the wildfires in Oregon and Washington State. After serving in the position for four months, Erick has since resumed his duties as deputy forest supervisor on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

A recognized need for support

In September, simultaneous wildfires broke out on the Mt. Hood National Forest, the Siuslaw National Forest, Fremont-Winema National Forest, the Willamette National Forest, the Umpqua National Forest, and the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. Operation Care and Recovery (OCAR) launched September 7, the Friday after Labor Day.

“The forests themselves were really focused on managing the incidents,” explained Erick. “They needed this outside group to provide them support, so they could focus on the immediate hazards and needs that come with fire suppression or hurricane response.” (National forests in the Southeast were still grappling with the aftermath of the hurricanes that occurred earlier in the year.)

Although local units traditionally provided employee support services in times of crisis, the National Leadership Council and members of the executive leadership team adopted a different approach.

“The emphasis around Operation Care and Recovery was how can the agency take an enterprise approach,” he said. “How can we, rather than let each unit figure out the solutions to the problems or needs that they have, solve [the problems] that at a regional scale or a national scale?”

In Region 6, where nearly 350 people were directly impacted by the wildfires, whether from damage or destruction of their offices or personal residences, or their living in an evacuation zone, this assistance was especially needed. “For us [the damage] was quite significant,” Erick said. “We wanted to make sure that these folks were taken care of and that they had the services or resources they needed to take care of themselves and their families, and ultimately the surrounding communities.”

Putting pieces back together

As team lead, Erick saw the challenge akin to the story of Humpty Dumpty. “My favorite term is, ‘How can we put



Clockwise from top left: OldSmokeys newsletter editor Andrea Watts, OldSmokeys board members Becki Heath, and Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Erick Walker.

Humpty Dumpty back together again?” he explained. “Humpty Dumpty came off the wall, broke into a lot of pieces, and now we’re trying to put these pieces back together in a way that Humpty is doing well.”

A small incident management team was formed with members of the regional leadership team. The first priority was providing employee care. “We had really good policy people dusting off regs to find avenues that I never knew existed,” Erick explained.

Under these regulations, the agency provided both lodging and subsistence reimbursements to employees and their family members up to 60 days after their evacuation orders. The emergency leave transfer program also proved a lifeline for employees. Although Region 6 was initially left off the list for receiving aid, “through perseverance and providing the necessary data we were able to get added to the list,” said Erick. “That was huge because our employees had a resource [to access] such as the emergency leave transfer program.”

By adopting an enterprise-wide approach, OCAR provided more consistency across units and ensured that all line officers had equal access to the same information. Yet Erick emphasized that this enterprise approach didn’t supplant the localized version of OCAR already in place at a number of national forests, including the Mt. Hood National Forest, the Umpqua National, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, and Willamette National Forest.

“We came in and tried to be that bigger umbrella to support their work,” he explained. “The questions they couldn’t answer or figure, that’s what they would funnel up to the Operation Care and Recovery team and we would try to answer that at the regional level. If we couldn’t, we would push it up to the national office.”

With a lull in the natural disasters that prompted the need for OCAR, the program is now focusing on mid- to long-term recovery efforts. Erick shared that they are



The human-caused Riverside Fire burned over 138,000 acres that included Mt. Hood National Forest and private forestland. Destroyed in the fire were government houses for seasonal employees. Photo courtesy of US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region

working on a Lessons Learned document, so when the next disaster occurs, all the information is readily accessible. The team is also assessing the effectiveness of the program and improvements going forward.

One such improvement the National Office is undertaking is on employee care to improve their efforts to connect employees to the private sector mental health and support services. “We are working to revamp the Employee Assistance Program so we cover everybody as best we can,” Erick said. “We realize we can’t be everything like the Veteran’s Administration is to our veterans. We want to make sure that our temporary workforce, those seasonal firefighters who may have lost their possessions after they were laid off, we don’t want those folks lost since trauma might start to set in.”

Other types of recovery underway

Although OCAR was the original focus of the interview, the conversation pivoted to how the agency is addressing the recovery of the landscape and the communities impacted by the wildfires. As is standard practice following a wildfire on national forests, Burned Area Emergency Response specialists (BAER) assessed the

threats to life and property that would result after the winter storms arrived.

Since the Federal Emergency Management Agency has a similar program that provides these services to states and private landowners, Erick said that Forest Service personnel collaborated with FEMA staff to share data and expertise.

Rapid Assessment Teams assessed the landscapes for work to be done and prioritized during 2021, such as salvage logging, reforestation, or noxious weed control. “Through the rapid assessment, we have also coordinated with state and private lands on [on our recovery efforts],” explained Erick. “For example, if there’s a ton of black [burned] wood coming off of state and industrial lands, the market only has so much capacity. We don’t want to clog the system. We’re trying to assess the needs of industry, communities, and our partners.”

As a result, the agency is looking at its ongoing and proposed timber sales to determine their impacts across the region, and whether work needs to be reprioritized or reshuffled to meet region targets. For example, “Mt. Hood has little capacity to put out green timber sales, so regionally to deliver on outcomes and outputs that are expected by the public and leadership admin, we may have to pick up that slack on other forests,” he said. “That’s where stewarding the whole comes in.”

The Forest Service is also bringing in help from the outside the region and partnering with state agencies to complete the needed work. A strike team of timber specialists from Region 1, in coordination with the Oregon Department of Transportation, are working on the Umpqua National Forest to oversee hazard tree removal efforts along state highways. Additionally, there is an OCAR representative who serves as a liaison to the state recovery efforts. This ensures that across all state and federal agencies, “we are all speaking with a similar voice,” said Erick. “We want to make sure that as we share information that’s not conflicting.”

With the agency having an estimated price tag of \$1.3 billion in damages on National Forest System lands, putting Humpty Dumpty back together again will take decades. Where the funding will come from is an unanswered question, since the Great American Outdoors Act money is for deferred maintenance and there isn’t disaster relief funding, as of yet. One possibility is a private-public venture, but the National Office will have to determine whether such an approach is feasible.

Yet Erick sees something positive worth calling out. “We have a golden opportunity, because Mother Nature reset the clock for us on the landscape to say, ‘Hey, instead of just going back to put everything back together the way it was, Humpty Dumpty is going to come back looking a whole lot better.’” *ON*

Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund assists OldSmokeys Families impacted by the 2020 fires

Thank you to all of you who donated to the Old Smokeys Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund to help those members of the Forest Service family who were impacted by the unprecedented wildfires this past fall. The response has been great, with over \$25,000 in donations.

We provided \$17,500 in immediate financial aid to 26 employees and retirees impacted by the wildfires in 2020. In addition, we recently

provided financial aid to two employees who needed assistance unrelated to the wildfires. OldSmokeys is committed to keeping the Elmer Moyer Emergency Fund available to those of the Forest Service family who have emergency needs now and into the future.

If you or if you know someone who needs assistance, contact Kurt Wiedenmann at grants@oldsmokeys.org or 208-501-4258. *ON*

Books for Your Reading List

Bush, Forester for Wilderness

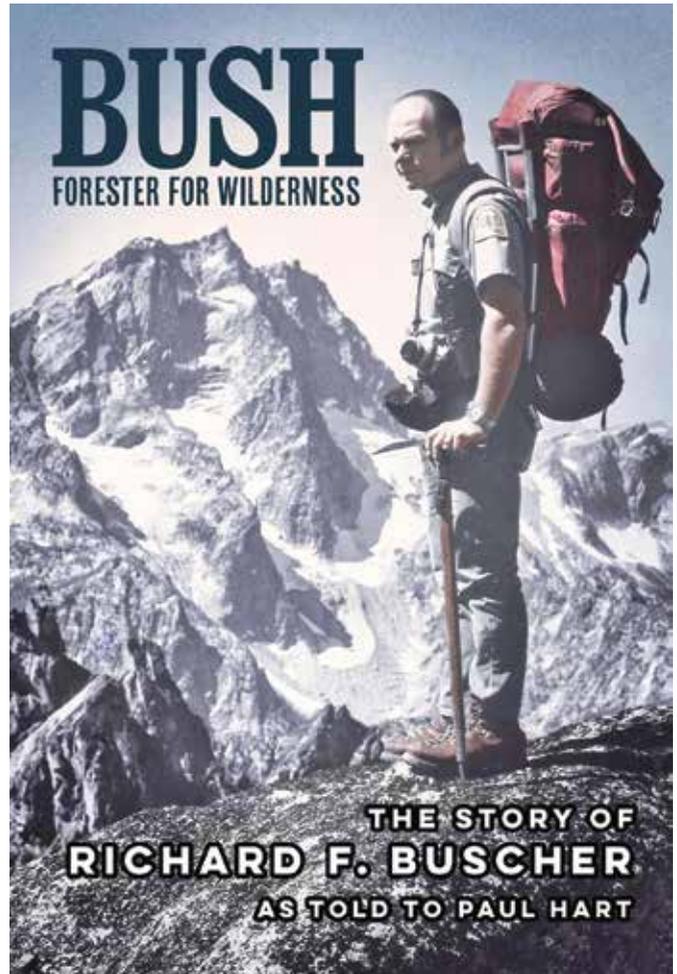
Book Review by Les Joslin and Paul Hart

After more than a dozen interviews with his 87-year-old friend OldSmokey **Richard F. “Bush” Buscher**, OldSmokey **Paul Hart** shares the life and achievements of this U.S. Forest Service forester who planned and drew the boundaries of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and the William O. Douglas Wilderness in Washington State in the just published book *Bush, Forester for Wilderness*. Paul expertly captured Buscher’s unique voice—reading the book is like listening to Bush. It’s fitting, therefore, that this review retains Paul’s voice.

During his career, “Bush led studies and developed plans for managing National Forest System lands in the North Cascades, Alpine Lakes, and Central Cascades,” shared Paul. “Before that, he worked on a team to develop a management plan for the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, designed timber sales in coastal forests, burned leftover logging slash with enthusiasm, and headed firefighting crews. He also served as a district ranger on the Mt. Hood National Forest in Oregon, deputy forest supervisor on the Wenatchee National Forest in Washington, and deputy director for recreation and wilderness for the Pacific Northwest Region.”

“Along the way, he made the most of memorable encounters with Forest Service leaders, congressmen and senators, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, and First Lady of the United States Lady Bird Johnson. He became a champion of and eloquent spokesman for Wilderness preservation, ecosystem management, and public service.”

Paul’s beautiful book traces Buscher’s life from birth on an Iowa farm, through U.S. Army service in Austria, to forestry school at Oregon State College, and an exciting career in the national forests of Oregon and Washington. It is profusely illustrated with black-and-white and color photographs. “I have been privileged to have worked with Dick Buscher on the Snoqualmie and Wenatchee National Forests and have enjoyed his friendship for more than 40 years.” Paul explained. “Bush has remarkable enthusiasm, humor, and devotion to management of the peoples’ forests and preservation of Wilderness.”



Paul notes it may seem inconsistent that Buscher supported active management of forests and cutting of trees while advocating for the preservation of large tracts of public forest in their natural state.

However, according to Buscher, federal laws that established the National Forest System show a clear difference between national forests and national parks. “All those laws indicate that the difference between national forests and national parks is that national forests are to produce multiple uses and are to be a timber supplier for the country,” he said.

So why is wilderness important? “Because we’ve fouled up all the rest of the country and we ought to leave a little bit alone,” Buscher said. “The Pasayten Wilderness in Washington is 500,000 acres...now that’s Wilderness...wild and wonderful. You could really,

truly feel remote, and feel that you were surrounded by country that man has not yet messed up.”

For Buscher, solitude is probably one of the key words in the Wilderness Act. “Wilderness presents an opportunity for solitude,” he explained. “If you really think about that...where else in this land is there an opportunity for solitude? It just doesn’t exist. Wilderness is a preservation of the world as God made it. It gave us a chance, in effect, to have a national outdoor laboratory to compare the natural world with the world we are changing by management,” he says. “Of course, I also have a strong conviction that Wilderness is a place for personal renewal. It’s my place of religious contemplation. It has great spiritual value.”

Bush, Forester for Wilderness is available for purchase at bookstores located in the cities of in Wenatchee, Leavenworth, or Yakima, Washington, or online at Amazon.com <https://tinyurl.com/hqa23t2i>.

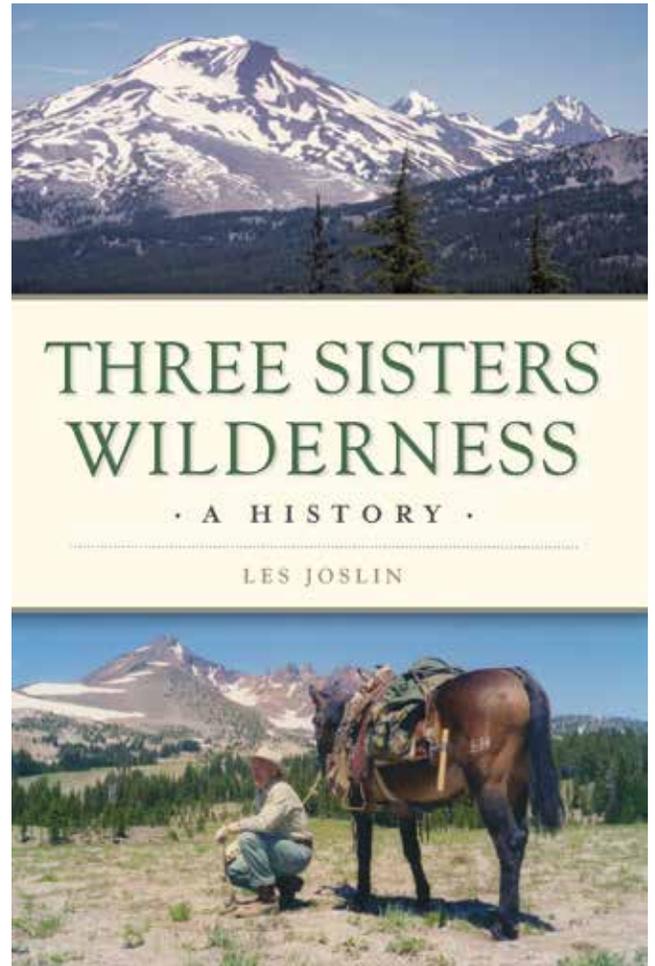
Now Available

Three Sisters Wilderness: A History

“There are many excellent hiking and backpacking guides to the Three Sisters Wilderness, but this is not one of them,” OldSmokey **Les Joslin** confesses in the introduction to *Three Sisters Wilderness: A History* just published this March by The History Press.

“This book, instead,” he continues, “is a brief guide to a more profound wilderness experience. It is a guide to understanding of the Three Sisters Wilderness as wilderness—to its natural and cultural history and to the philosophical, legal, and management concepts that combine to keep it a wilderness.” It is also a guide written for the general reader.

In 175 pages, Les—editor of your *OldSmokeys Newsletter* from Spring 2006 through 2019—shares the history of the wilderness concept and its expression in Oregon’s most visited and second largest National Wilderness Preservation System unit located within the Deschutes and Willamette National Forests. He does this in four concise chapters illustrated by 90 photographs—including 32 in full color on 16 pages nestled between pages 66 and 67—and several maps and diagrams.



Les served 14 seasons in the Three Sisters Wilderness followed by two years as team leader for recreation, heritage, and wilderness resources on the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest. He has taught wilderness management courses at Central Oregon Community College and Oregon State University and received the U.S. Forest Service Chief’s Wilderness Education Leadership Award in 2000. He has published several books on aspects of U.S. Forest Service history. *ON*

Three Sisters Wilderness: A History (ISBN 9781467146654) is available in paperback from The History Press, an imprint of Arcadia Publishing, for \$21.99 and may be ordered directly through Arcadia’s website, <https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/>.

Fighting Wildfire Amidst a Pandemic

Dean Vendrasco and Ed Lewis expected to remain retired in 2020 until a request from the PNW Coordination Group changed their plans. A brand-new position created in response of the COVID-19 pandemic needed filled in Region 6, and each man would bring invaluable experience to the position. Dean had a 38-year career with the Forest Service, having retired in 2012 as fire staff on the Willamette National Forest and Eugene Bureau of Land Management and served on incident management teams since 1990. Ed, the former chief of Spokane County Fire District 4, had a career spanning over 40 years of navigating local government and emergency management, and nearly 30 years on incident management teams.

“We are committed to helping the firefighters and committed to PNW Team 3, so we accepted the position,” Dean explained.

The two men became the 2020 Northwest Wildland Fire COVID-19 Pandemic Coordinators with the goal of providing the best possible care of the firefighter while serving the public during the current COVID-19 outbreak. And the numbers are a testimony to their efforts: 32,000 personnel passed through the camps, yet there were less than 10 Covid-19 positive cases, although Dean is quick to add the caveat, “to the best of our knowledge that we knew about.”

How did Region 6 keep the firefighters safe? Ed and Dean shared with the OldSmokeys editorial team how the collective effort of health care professionals, incident commanders, and the firefighters accomplished this.

Behind-the-scenes preparation

To coordinate exposure mitigation among wildland fire management governmental agencies and partner organizations, beginning in early March the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) tasked the three National Area Command Teams (ACT) and one Geographic Area (GA) Incident Management Team (IMT) to coordinate with federal, state, county, local, and Tribal officials to identify issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic and wildland fire response.

They were directed to develop Wildland Fire Response Plans (WFRPs) for each of the ten GAs. These plans specifically addressed practices for maintaining continuity of wildland fire response and sustaining, to the extent possible, the highest degree of resource availability while



During the 2020 fire season, the layout of the camps was designed to not only provide distance between firefighting crews but also distance at essential camp facilities, such as the kitchen and showers. Photos courtesy of Ed Lewis

ensuring safety and protection of all wildland fire response personnel at all levels in all areas.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) were developed as part of the WFRPs as adaptive protocols for use in minimizing Covid-19 spread during all wildland fire suppression operations. Important areas addressed included initial attack, extended attack, and large fire response, coordination and support functions (dispatch, cache, etc.) and IMT operations. These GA WFRPs were augmented by local units, IMTs, firefighting units, and others as appropriate.

The first week of May, Region 6 received The Wildland Fire Response Plan. The PNW Coordination Group tasked PNW Team 3 with the challenge to figure how to distill the document down to the firefighter. As Team 3’s incident commander, Noel Livingston and his group “started to build, if you will, this document that really became the basis for how we’ve conducted business in the Northwest,” said Ed.

As development of the best practices was underway, the PNW Coordination Group drafted a job description for a Northwest Wildfire COVID-19 Pandemic Coordinator, which later became a two-person position based on the recommendation of Ed and Dean.

By month’s end, Team 3 produced a set of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for operating in a Covid-19 envi-

ronment. In spite of the novelty of the pandemic, according to Ed, “COVID just became another hazard in a very hazardous environment.”

This set of BMPs was distributed to the incident management teams. Embedded within these BMPs was the necessary flexibility to allow incident commanders to make decisions as needed.

“All of those of us who have been involved with teams recognize that everyone deals with things a little bit different,” Ed said. “[The document] was meant to provide some guidance so that we could hopefully even the playing field as we went into the 2020 fire season.”

And on July 1, Ed and Dean began their new duties as Northwest Wildfire COVID-19 Pandemic Coordinators.

Life behind the fireline reimagined

Implementing the BMPs resulted in reimagining how to safely stage people and support services when fighting wildfires. What used to be centralized operations became decentralized in 2020.

“We had to take firefighters and spread them across the landscape in spike camps,” said Dean. “They managed themselves, and we tried to keep crews in modules.”

Throughout the spike camps, mask wearing was mandatory and a greater attention to personal hygiene was emphasized, as well as personal accountability. “What we focused on was prevention and messaging,” Ed explained. “Our message was, ‘It’s up to you because we can’t do it.’”

To maintain social distancing, there were no buffet lines; individual meals were packed and usually picked up by one member of the module. Gone were the morning group briefings, replaced now with a radio brief. Timesheets became electronic to further reduce physical contact.

For those who worked in an incident command post (ICP) pre-2020 they would have noticed a stark difference in 2020’s ICP; there were fewer people onsite. “BMPs changed who needs to be a command environment versus who could now be virtual or in an offsite incident management post,” explained Ed. “Teams had flexibility to craft how they felt it was appropriate. Everyone managed a bit different.”

New to the Incident Management Team was a health

A Crash Course in the World of Firefighting Acronyms

If you haven’t had experience working in the firefighting space, it may be confusing to understand the organizational hierarchy or acronyms that are casually included in conversations. Here’s a breakdown of common terms you’ll come across or hear people mention.

National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

– This is a national, regional, or local management group for interagency planning, coordination, and operations leadership for incidents. Provides an essential management mechanism for strategic coordination to ensure incident resources are efficiently and appropriately managed in a cost-effective manner. (Source: National Wildfire Coordinating Group)

National Area Command Teams

– Area Command Teams (ACT) are professional senior-level Management Teams available to assist local agencies when the complexity or magnitude of an emergency situation, hazardous incident, or wildland fire exceeds the capacity and span of control for the local unit. Area Command Teams are organized and managed by the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, ID. Currently, there are three (Land Management) Area Command Teams in the United States. (Source: National Interagency Area Command)

Geographic Area

- A boundary designated by governmental agencies (wildland fire protection agencies) within which they work together for the interagency, intergovernmental planning, coordination, and operations leadership for the effective utilization of emergency management resources within their area. There are nine geographic areas. (Source: National Wildfire Coordinating Group)

Incident Management Team

- The incident commander and appropriate general and command staff personnel assigned to an incident. (Source: National Wildfire Coordinating Group)

care liaison, along with two specialists from the structural fire service since they had experience in the public health space. Dean and Ed also coordinated with state and local agencies who were responsible for managing for COVID-19, agencies that included the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State Fire Marshals, Washington State Fire Marshals, and Washington Fire Chiefs Association. “Without those people, this effort would not have come off,” Ed said.

Local public health officials handled the responsibility of testing the firefighters who self-reported symptoms. Both Ed and Dean credit the incident management teams who set an example that the risk of COVID-19 needed to be taken seriously and the BMPs followed.

Current Benefits and Future Improvements

Predictably, Dean and Ed field the question of whether these COVID-19 measures were more costly. To this, Dean has a ready answer: “If you look at the effects of spreading the firefighters out, the effects of not getting people sick or the effects of not having camp crud, how do you put a dollar figure to that?”

There are some changes that will persist even after the pandemic has subsided. “We have learned that we don’t have to be on scene every time with every position,” explained Dean. “We have noticed that we can do our jobs virtually as efficiently in person and that is huge.”

“One of the key things we see is solidifying, not just recommending, the attachment of a health liaison to a team,” Ed said.

For 2021’s BMPs, Dean expects the concept of the “module of one” will be better defined since it wasn’t well understood by those in the field. A module of one was conceived, he explained, as “a new crew coming on in the beginning of the fire year and they all stay together in a bunk house. They work together and don’t go home at night. Because if someone does, that breaks the module of one.”

“The definition as it was written, was of a traditional family under one roof,” added Ed. “Was it understood—no. But the concept was good to get people to minimize the contact outside their bubble whether they were on an incident or not.”



The Preparedness Review is an annual gathering where all levels of fire management meet to demonstrate their proficiency in all aspects of wildland firefighting, operations, and safety. A new addition to the 2020 Preparedness Review was COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Photo courtesy of US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region

Another benefit of the agency having gone through this experience with COVID-19 and developing these BMPS is that this is not the only pandemic we will experience; epidemiologists are already warning of another inevitable pandemic. “This is an off-the-shelf pandemic/health-related document that we can put to work no matter what the threat will look like,” Ed said.

What did the agency leadership have to say about the 2020 wildfire season? In the agency’s year-end news release, USDA Forest Service Reflects on Challenges and Triumphs of 2020, the agency shared, “The Forest Service was successful in prioritizing early suppression of wildfire ignitions while facing a record-breaking fire year, with the most acres burned on national forests since 1910.

The agency’s modeling research on how COVID-19 may spread between firefighters or in communities during response efforts led to new interagency safety protocols to better support fire camp management. The protocols not only successfully minimized the spread of COVID-19 among the agency’s 10,000 firefighters, but early learning suggests the safety measures resulted in additional health benefits to fire crews, reducing ailments common in fire camps, which translated to a healthier and more resilient firefighting workforce available to protect lives, homes, and communities threatened by wildfire.” *ON*

National Museum's History Corner



By Andy Mason

Despite the pandemic impacts we all experienced in 2020, the Museum had another outstanding year. These are our highlights.

Conservation Legacy Center

The Museum's capital campaign had another very good year. We stand at 80 percent of our goal, with about \$2.2 million left to raise to construct the flagship building on our campus in Missoula. After much consideration, the Board decided to redesign the Conservation Legacy Center (CLC) so it maximizes the use of wood and, in particular, mass timber technology, which is a building framing system that uses large solid-wood panels for wall, floor, and roof construction. The Museum hired Tom Chung, principal architect with Leers Weinzapfel Associates, to work closely with our CLC design working group. The Museum also hired art processors to help us plan exhibits and the overall experience we will offer visitors in the CLC and throughout our campus. The Museum continues to have very strong support from many partners locally, regionally, and nationally. Our partners are already making a real difference in our grant applications and outreach to donors and investors. We believe 2021 could very well be the year we finish our capital campaign.

Regional Cadres Established

To increase awareness of Museum program and activities among retirees, current employees, and other communities of interest, each region is recruiting "cadres" of volunteers. Bob Williams serves as director of PNW Cadre (Region 6, Pacific Northwest Research Station) aided by three cadre members: Cindy Miner, Pete Owston, and Al Garr. Cindy is also the Museum's liaison with the PNW Station. To strengthen communication between the Board, directors, and cadre members, each region also has a Board member liaison, which for the PNW Region is Liz Agpaoa. If you are interested in serving on the PNW Region Cadre, please contact Bob Williams at rwwms35@gmail.com or (360) 576-5364.

Membership Tops 1000!

Thanks in large part to outreach by the regional cadres and our special 2020 individual membership rate, Museum membership reached 1,011 at year's end for the

first time ever. Our 2021 membership incentive: All new members (\$30 individual rate) and anyone who upgrades their membership (e.g. from individual to sustaining) will receive a stainless steel Hydro flask (valued at \$29-39) while they last. If you are not a member already, please join and help us accomplish our vital mission – sharing the rich history and story of America's conservation legacy.

Join online at

<https://forestservicemuseum.org/become-a-member/>.

Ranger Roll Call

Dave Stack, with help from volunteer Samantha Hamilton, a graduate student at San Jose State University, is creating "National Forest histories" that include the names of every district ranger and their years of service on each forest and grassland dating back to 1905. Much of the information we have was provided in response to our Ranger Roll Call initiative that began in August 2019 with a letter from the Museum to every district ranger in the nation. Twenty five National Forest histories with ranger lists, including the Gifford Pinchot, are now almost complete and available online at National Museum of Forest Service History : Online Collections (pastperfectonline.com). Follow-up letters are being sent to all forest supervisors, with CCs to their regional foresters. If you can help us fill in ranger lists on any forest in Region 6, please contact Andy Mason at acmason1954@gmail.com or (571) 214-5536.

The Museum also recently asked each Station to provide, since its inception, past names of the Station and their directors and tenures. We requested the names and locations of historically important research work units/centers/laboratories and their leaders/lead scientists. Please contact Cindy Miner, clminer@gmail.com or (503) 582-9878 if you can help with this important Museum project for the PNW Station.

Museum Collection Grows! – 37,000 Available Online

Enough cannot be said about Dave Stack, the Museum's full-time volunteer historian and curator, and also Board member and Vice President. Due in very large part to Dave's efforts, the Museum's incredible collection now totals almost 48,000 items, including 37,000 available

for viewing online at
<https://forestservicemuseum.pastperfectonline.com/>.

On a weekly if not daily basis, Dave answers questions that are submitted from across the nation about our collection, provides items for research and exhibit, and continues to catalog new items. One example is from a large collection of items donated in 2020 by former Chief Dale Robertson. The “Russian Warrior Statue” was a gift to Chief Robertson from the Minister of Forestry of Russia and came with a bottle of vodka (not included with museum artifact). The gift was presented in the early 1990s during a visit by the Minister to see forestry in action as part of a larger effort between our two countries to reverse the “Cold War,” which was led by President George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Soviet Union.



Both newsletters can be viewed online along with all our newsletters dating back to the first issue, May 2002 (<https://forestservicemuseum.org/newsletters/>).

Online Auction Fundraiser Coming Soon!

Due to the pandemic, in-person fundraisers such as our very successful Teddy events (2018-Missoula; 2019-Scottsdale) are not being planned until 2022, however the Museum will be holding an online auction fundraiser in April 2021. Board members, regional directors, cadre members, and many others have generously donated a wide range of items for our auction such as vacation rentals, fishing trips, artwork, handcrafted furniture, ski tickets, and so much more! The auction will be open for at least two weeks. Sharpen up your bidding skills and stay tuned for more information in the near future. Please share the auction information widely so we can raise the most funds possible on every item. The online auction is vital to supporting all Museum programs and activities outside of our capital campaign.

Museum Newsletters Featured History of District Rangers, Rangeland Management

We’ve received a great deal of positive feedback on our 2020 newsletters, “The Rangers – They Broke New Ground,” and “Ranchers & Rangers: The Unique Story of Rangeland Management and Public Land Grazing.”

Contact us if you need more information

Do you have questions about any programs and activities at the Museum? We offer updates via Zoom if you and a group of friends are interested. Please contact: Lisa Tate, Executive Director, lisa.tate@forestservicemuseum.org, (406) 541-6374. *ON*

National Museum of Forest Service History
SPECIAL OFFER for New Members!



Our goal is to have 2,021 members by the end of the year 2021. Become a new member today and receive a FREE Hydro Flask! Become a Life Member and receive one of each size (four total) Hydro Flasks!

Already a member? Upgrade your membership to the Contributing level or above and receive a FREE Hydro Flask!

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Welcome New OldSmokeys Members

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

Susan Alexander and Rudy Branter of Sandy, Oregon. Sandy was a Program Manager with the PNW Research Station, stationed in Juneau, Alaska. Prior to this, she was the Regional Economist for Region 10 in Juneau and a Research Scientist with the PNW Research Station in Corvallis, Oregon. She is a small woodland owner and, along with doing various woodland management chores, is exploring making bigleaf maple syrup and restoring an old 1880s' era farmhouse.

Robert and Gary Genrty of Detroit, Oregon. Robert is a Natural Resources staff officer and have served as a Rec Staff, Rec Tech and Wilderness Ranger. He spends his off time flyfishing, hiking, and photographing the outdoors.

Dan Hauswald and Sara Blade-Hauswald of Bend, Oregon. Dan works in the Fire/Fuels Management unit on the Bend-Ft. Rock Ranger District on the Deschutes National Forest. In his off hours, he is raising kids.

Michele Holman of Waldport, Oregon. Michele is the District Ranger on the Central Coast Ranger District on the Siuslaw National Forest. In her off hours, she likes to read, hike, and chase after her teenage boys.

Marcia and Gary Kemp of Lexington, Oregon. Marcia works in business management support and spends her free time volunteering in her community.

John Kim of Corvallis, Oregon. John's area of work is in vegetation modeling. He enjoys spending time outdoors hiking, snowboarding, and surfing.

Heidi McRoberts of Lewiston, Idaho. Heidi is the Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Umatilla National Forest. Prior to joining this forest, she was a fisheries biologist and worked on forest plan revision for the Nez Perce National Forest.

Nora and Ethan Miebach of Aumsville, Oregon. Nora serves as a member of the Regional Leadership Team in Region 6 as the Director of Data Resource Management, and her program is responsible for the overall management of all regional Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Remote Sensing, Cartography, Records Manage-

ment, and Natural Resource Monitoring. During her off hours, she is lucky to have a working five-acre farm with her husband, and much of her time is spent outside maintaining and managing their berries and fruit trees.

Joann Pollock of Halfway, Oregon. Prior to retirement, Joann worked as a Receptionist and has also spent time working on the Wallow-Whitman National Forest. She now spends her time volunteering, riding her four-wheeler, and hanging out with her grandkids.

Annie and Daniel Pollock of Halfway, Oregon. Annie currently works in contracting, and in her off hours is a mom to three very active kids.

Mike and Carol Ramsey of Lakeview, Oregon. Mike is a Wildlife Biologist and District Ranger.

Annie Wittenberg of Sisters, Oregon. Annie has been the Developed Recreation Manager for the Bend Fort Rock Ranger District since 2019. This year she finished her NEPA Graduate Certificate. Annie detailed as a NEPA Planner and hopes to move her career toward NEPA Planning and Environmental Coordination. She first joined the Forest Service in 1990 but left in 2000 to raise a family, and returned in 2017 to work at the Ochoco National Forest. In her spare time, Annie has a couple of construction projects underway, assists her daughter training BLM Mustangs for adopters, and is bait girl and part-time deck hand for her sweetheart's ocean fishing guide service, Patriot Fishing, which operates out of Newport, Oregon.

Andy and Debbie Mason of Carefree, Arizona. Andy worked in the Washington Office R&D as Director of the USDA National Agroforestry Center prior to his retirement. Before joining the Washington Office, worked in Region 6 on the Okanogan National Forest as a other resource assistant, and on the Colville National Forest. He spends his retirement volunteering with the National Museum of Forest Service History as a board member and is the secretary for the Southwest Agroforestry Action Network. Andy also enjoys golfing, traveling, and gardening. *ON*

Recreating and Working on the Deschutes National Forest During the Covid-19 Pandemic

This past year has challenged business, nonprofits, and governmental agencies to reimagine how to operate in a reality where in-person meetings and working in the office pose safety risks. Additionally, with people remaining home due to lockdowns, they are recreating within their immediate area and often visiting their nearby public lands.

The OldSmokeys editorial team virtually sat down with Forest Supervisor Holly Jewkes and Trails Program Manager Justin Ewer to learn how they are managing the public and themselves in the middle of a pandemic and what operations in 2021 will look like. Justin is also the Region 6 rep for the Wilderness Information Management Steering Team, and they have a subgroup looking at high use related to COVID nationally.

Our conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

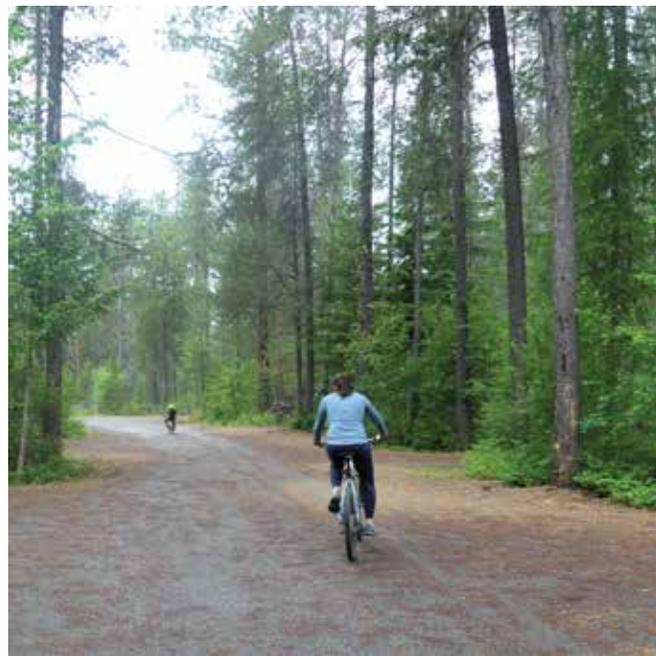
RECREATION

Have you noticed a noticeable difference of people out on the forest from last summer compared to the previous summer?

Justin – Oh yeah! The Wilderness Information Management Steering Team looked around the country for data to support the increase in usage that we all were observing. It was pretty self-evident that recreation uses are really up everywhere. I had a conversation with the Ben Lawhon, the education director for the Leave No Trace Center, and he has not talked to a single manager who has said their usage has gone down.

I would say that's the same for our forest. For example, we have a few data points that suggest winter recreation is up at least 50 percent. It's worth pointing out that increase is not uniform.

We've seen some interesting distributional effects occurring; it's not just the larger number but it's the way it's showing up. This summer, we saw a noticeable increase in use at traditional low-key, quiet out-of-the-way places. We saw increases in unauthorized



As was the case seen on many national forests across the nation, the Deschutes National Forest saw an increase in visitor use and users trying out new recreational activities. Photo courtesy of US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region

trail building, where people wanted to avoid the crowds on the trail network, so they decided to build their own.

We've seen changes in when people recreate. For example, it's peak use season on the Cascade Lakes highways at the snow parks. Dutchman snow park is a real popular place for backcountry skiing. Folks go up there at 5 a.m., but even then, they are not guaranteed a spot—it can be full that early. We have also seen changes in behavior; a lot of folks are going to snow parks just to hang out.

This increase in numbers can affect public safety. When the snow parks are full, people are parking on the side of highway, which has implications for plowing and plows being able to turn around. Egress and ingress for emergency vehicles is challenging even when it's just one or two poorly parked vehicles, but now it's 60. Trying to get a handle on that is challenging.



To keep employees safe on the job, a number of safety measures were adopted to mitigate the risk of exposure to Covid-19, including wearing masks and only one occupant to a vehicle. Photo courtesy of US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region

How have the methods in which the public contacts you changed, such as if they have questions about which trails are open?

Justin –A lot hasn't necessarily changed that much in regard to how folks are reaching out to us; it's, phone calls and emails much like it was before. What I've seen is an increased volume, and I largely attribute that increase in volume to more people being out on the forest.

Beyond the high use, we've seen a lot of new visitors and that can be new in terms of the purest of sense—new to the national forest or new to the activity. In other cases, it might be folks who are looking for new areas or places. And then we've also seen folks that are deciding to pick up new activities, such as cross-country skiing or mountain biking.

Last year there was talk of a limited use permit system in the Three Sisters around Green Lake. How are you managing that program given Covid-19?

Holly – We chose not to implement that based on where things were in the spring; it just didn't feel like the right year. We are planning on implementing the permit system this year, and wheels are in motion to do that. It will be interesting this first year and we're really just trying to focus on education the first couple of years.

Our campgrounds alone, even though they opened late, saw increased use and revenue. That's another indicator that use was up. I've heard anecdotally across National

Forest System there has been somewhere around a 40 percent increase, but that's broadscale and doesn't have all the nuances that Justin was sharing.

Justin – The Wilderness Information Management Steering Team is talking about trying to provide tools to managers to deal with this increased visitor use. Some forests have traditionally been high-use forests, while others have started to experience this for the first time. You have managers asking basic questions around how to deal with this higher visitor usage or approach incorporating this increase into a long-term planning perspective. Trying to unpack that's going to take a little bit of time and work.

Holly – We've talked a lot about the recreational use increase, but some of the use we're seeing isn't just traditional recreation use. It's also the forest being a place folks to go for a different setting particularly near more urban environments, such as around the city of Bend. People are finding those locations that they might not have gone to in the past. We're not alone in facing those challenges by any stretch. Every other land manager in central Oregon and probably everywhere in the West is dealing with similar things. One of my hopes, and an ongoing effort with local partners, is that we gain additional stewards of our forest into the future as a result of increased use.

WORKING DURING A PANDEMIC

How has meeting targets last year been different compared to two years ago?

Holly – When Covid became a reality, we—and still do to this day—rallied around the idea that employee and public safety is most important, and targets, while still important, were way less important. We spent a lot of time trying to understand how we manage under a Covid scenario. Somehow, we did achieve a lot of our targets in spite of all the challenges. I'm unsure how we did it other than the fortitude of the folks who work for us.

Holly, could you talk about the changes you made when it became apparent that everyone would be working from home, yet some employees' jobs required them to go to the field. How did you keep people safe?

Holly – We've had so many conversations about this, and we are actually starting to discuss what next field season looks like. In the beginning, it became clear there are people whose roles are in the field, whether that's site

maintenance, fire preparedness, working at the Redmond air center and or keeping our restoration vegetation management program going. We prioritized what the priorities were for using vehicles, because those were a limiting factor if we are keeping to one person per vehicle outside of fire.

The other piece concerns our administrative folks who are going into the office to get the mail or receive the packages, and reducing their exposure. We encouraged folks that if they want to go into the field, to minimize their time in the office to keep that separation between folks. We tried to give opportunities to get to the field, because it's so important to employees to actually see and be in the forest.

Have you seen many cases of COVID among employees?

Holly – I wouldn't say many, but we had probably close to a dozen positive cases. Fortunately, no one's become hospitalized for any reactions to it.

Has it been challenging to supervise employees and direct work?

Holly – For me it's been a year of trying to take care of folks. Different people are in different situations all through this, whether you're a parent of school-age children or whether you live alone. There can be challenges with where people live. Is it set up to allow them to be successful with teleworking? There's been the challenge of whether internet bandwidth allows employees to stay on Microsoft Teams or not. For me, it's been less about worrying about directing work and more worrying about people and doing the best we can to try to make them feel valued and connected.

Justin – You do lose a little bit of that face to face and some of that ad hoc side conversations, which can be valuable from a supervision or operational sense. As a result, you just try to foster a sense of community and team. There are more challenges with that and making sure folks feel connected.

How are your employees doing emotionally and mentally during this time since they aren't seeing their friends or coworkers on a daily basis?

Holly – I always describe it as a mixed since day one of COVID and shutting the office down. Now that vaccines are starting to come around, there's some more hope in the future for folks and that's helping some. There are folks who are really struggling with not being in the office and having that personal connection. Schools have

started returning to being in-person, which I'm hoping helps our parents with school-age children.

We miss a lot of that hallway conversation or the parking lot where you solve the problem, and everything is pretty formal now to have that conversation. You have to invite someone to a Teams meeting or you have to pick up the phone and call, I miss those informal conversations, and I know other people miss them too.

There's definitely been some rough days, whether it's around COVID cases or fire season, and I rely a lot on my peers. It's one of those times when phoning a friend who is the same role as you is really helpful because they're probably going to have a bad day and I'm going to have one, and having that relationship is super important. That's been really helpful for me through some of the more ragged days.

Justin – I'll echo what Holly said about it being mixed, because there's definitely been challenges. It's not uncommon for folks to feel burned out, especially around the end of field season. That especially seemed to be the case this year given the challenges folks faced, not just COVID but also the fires we had.

Are there a set of guidelines that have to be met before you can return to the office?

Holly – The USDA has a workplace safety plan, and there's actually a dashboard that I will look at, which has county COVID data where your offices are located. As the case numbers, hospital rates, and ICU occupancy go down, we can move through the phases. It takes two weeks to move between phases. Phase 3 is getting back to something that looks like it used to. I won't say normal because I don't know that's the case, but we're still a ways out from that.

Justin – I'm just speaking for myself, but I think a lot of folks have probably gotten flexible as to what a return to normal might look like and when a return might happen. One of the themes has just been, for one we've been operating in an environment where there has still been a lot of unknowns in regard to COVID, and there's definitely been a lot of things that have changed along the way and I think there's an expectation that will continue to be the case. I don't know there's a real strong expectation on timelines. Everybody knows there could still be twists and turns in the road ahead.

What have you learned as a result of working remotely that you may continue into the future?

Holly – There’s certainly a lot of things to carry forward. By having everything remote, we’ve created a lot more space in the day for meetings since we don’t need that space between meeting because we’re not driving. As we look toward our doing our work in the future, based on this experience, are we really going to drive four hours to meet with a subset of people or are we going to do it on Teams?

Making some of those choices is probably one of those big pieces going forward. I know people are going to want to get together when we can do that safely but maybe we’ll make different choices about travel. And when it comes to how we engage the public, you can get a whole lot more people on a venue like this than you can have a meeting at a certain time and a certain place.

Justin –There’s likely to be more an openness to telework. We’ve all been forced to do that. Prior to the pandemic, it was more of an ad hoc basis and I think there were a lot of folks who maybe weren’t as interested in doing it or thought it might result in less

productivity. If anything, this experience this has taught us that that can be a piece of the puzzle and I would expect some of the changes to how we do work will persist.

What can retirees do to help you during this time?

Holly – As I think about COVID and how the OldSmokeys reached out during last year’s fire season, having that emergency fund was really helpful to several employees in this region who really needed the help at that time.

For me as a leader, while I can’t hand people money or have all the solutions, that emergency fund is an awesome thing to have—to be able to support people on their worst days.

The other thing I’d encourage retirees to do is if they know the person who’s in their position or in a similar position, just reach out and say hi or send an email. Those little things matter, especially these days. *ON*

OldSmokeys Logo Hat

Show your OldSmokeys 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.



A Frontline and Personal Reflection on COVID-19

As one of four health officers with the state of Oregon's Multnomah County Public Health Department, Dr. Ann Loeffler's workdays are filled with responding to COVID-19 and other infectious disease situations, such as the recent Legionnaires outbreak. "The rest of public health didn't stop when Covid came," she says, adding, "We don't work 10 hours every day, but there's never a day that we don't work."



Dr. Ann Loeffler

Prior to joining the county in April 2020, Loeffler worked for 17 years at Randall Children's Hospital at Legacy Emanuel, specializing in pediatric infectious diseases. At the end of her workday on January 27, 2021, Loeffler shared the latest updates on Covid and personal reflections of what the future holds.

How to reduce becoming ill with COVID

What we are coming to know is that the more viral particles you're exposed to, the sicker you are likely to be, and there are a few underlying health conditions that will make it likely you'll get very ill. Cardiovascular issues, such as high blood pressure and heart disease, diabetes, and severe obesity are the big three. There is also a direct correlation with age: If you are over 65 and, especially if you're over 80, you're at an enormous risk for a bad outcome.

Anything you can do to promote your own health, such as getting your diabetes under control, keeping your blood pressure under good control, and moving your body is good. Daily exercise is the number one stimulator of the immune system in a good way.

Protect yourself and each other

If we want to continue enjoying the success we've had these last few weeks [in Oregon], the new normal is our old normal. It's masking when you're not with your household members. It's recognizing when you have symptoms and getting tested. It's really minimizing the

risk you put yourself in, so you don't become a contact. If you do travel, do your own self-quarantine for two weeks. If you are in a situation where you might have acquired some risk, lay low. A solid 40 percent of those infected don't have symptoms and can transmit the virus; it's not as effective but they can transmit.

I hope that our new normal is starting to have more self-care. My own family has started a regular Sunday night call, and I play virtual Bananagrams with my niece and nephews. I just hear from more people saying, "Screw this being alone." Yet we're nowhere near being done with this virus. We have two vaccines, but we're not going to get anywhere near vaccinating the whole population—we're just touching the most vulnerable people. And we still don't know the role of the new variants. [Editor's note, as this issue when to press, three vaccines are now approved.]

Staying optimistic

I'm so busy, and I'm lucky to have a job where I feel impactful. If I did something where I didn't feel I was doing good for the world and everything else was hard, I would have a hard time. I'm also a spiritual person. I'm lucky that I can go to that place and look for consolation and guidance. There I can find the strength to know that we can get through this. And we have amazing teams of people working on this virus.

Why vaccinate

This virus is really creepy, and it does mean, nasty things, yet I had the same concerns about the vaccine as the public. I have arthritis, and I don't want to take something that will make it worse. But we're all in this together. It can't be me waiting for the other 99 percent of people to get the vaccine—I want to be part of the solution.

I've also come to have a lot of confidence in the science that went into developing the vaccine and into monitoring for adverse reactions. Last March, the first person received the Moderna vaccine, so we're 10 months into monitoring them and the 30,000 study subjects who were recruited. And they're still recruiting new study subjects; the vaccine is now being studied in kids. We're going to be seeing a lot more data, and I think people should not be afraid to get the vaccine. *ON*

OldSmokeys Share their Pandemic Stories

Richard “Dick” Zechentmayer – This is a photo of Mary Lou and I after our 1st Moderna vaccine. We followed Governor Newsom's stay-at-home decree, but I want to hug my family members, not just use Zoom.



Phil Weber - I have continued air travel throughout the pandemic, flying from SeaTac to Salt Lake City, Utah, and Houston, Texas. I'm being careful to wear face coverings and use liberal amounts of anti-bacterial wipes. I'm not real happy flying five hours in a packed airplane, even sitting in first class, but no problems to date.

Les and Pat Joslin - We've made constructive use of time the pandemic freed up from our normal pursuits. Les was prevented from coordinating the twelfth consecutive season of daily operation of the PNWF-SA-sponsored High Desert Ranger Station at the High Desert Museum south of Bend, which is usually staffed by a dozen OldSmokey volunteers for about 75 days. Instead, he focused on completing *Three Sisters Wilderness: A History* (See Books for Your Reading List).

We rehabilitated the Cascade Lakes National Scenic Byway signage along a 55-mile stretch of that road and pulled hundreds of spotted knapweed plants in a Deschutes River meadow. Pat sewed hundreds of

Covid-19 masks for a range of users. We both read many more books than usual. A positive attitude and an active schedule are the keys to coping with adversity. Once the pandemic ends, we plan to go out to dinner to celebrate our December 5 50th wedding anniversary many months after the fact and to resume a more active social, service, and travel schedule.

Ruth Voltz - We were in Las Vegas with our friends from Northern Ireland when the seriousness of Covid-19 became known to us. Our friends had a month of activities planned in Nevada and California—meeting up with us for a few days in Vegas was their first stop. The biggest event was the tennis tournaments at Indian Wells. On our third day together, they learned that event had been canceled. By the time we parted, most of their plans had been put asunder. After a few days they decided to head home while they could still enter Northern Ireland.

The day after we returned, Governor Brown shuttered the state of Oregon. We went from a calendar full of activities, such as bridge, water aerobics, volunteering at the library, and numerous social activities to FULL STOP!!!

Aha! There was something I could do! Out came the sewing machine and I began to produce masks for family, friends, and neighbors. We kept busy for a time with deferred maintenance projects; after all, Home Depot was open! And I spent way too much time in the kitchen—my happy place. I learned to make biscotti and quite enjoyed it. But, something was missing. A sense of purpose you might say.

So, when Dick Bennett decided he was ready to “retire” as treasurer of the Old Smokeys, I volunteered to assume that role. Not only do I have an accounting background, but Dick was instrumental in helping me get that college degree. I worked for him, in Juneau, Alaska, while attending the University of Alaska. Sometimes a required course was only offered during the day. Dick allowed me to adjust my work hours, enabling me to pursue my education while working in a job that I loved. He was my friend and mentor.

Who knew that, after a rewarding career with numerous duty stations, I would come to Portland and renew old acquaintance with Dick because he had retired nearby. I look forward to following in his footsteps knowing full well that he will be there to help me be successful. I am enjoying getting to know the other board members. They have been so welcoming and helpful. I am proud to be a part of the Old Smokeys organization and working in support of our mission.

Yes, I miss all of the “normal” activities but, first and foremost, I look forward to spending time with our family. Can’t wait for those hugs!



By Nancy J. Gibson IC/Cadre

One thing the pandemic provided was an opportunity to step back and spend time with those closest to us as we absorbed all that has happened this past year.

Whether through Zoom or within a family “pod,” we’ve realized, perhaps more than ever, the importance of human connection. Given all we’ve experienced, with more to learn on vaccine availability and the like, a January 2021 registration period, for a September 2021 event, would have had little success.

Now, looking ahead, the Reunion Team and I are energized to make 2022 the best reunion ever! Remember to mark your calendars for August 29 through September 2, 2022; with early-bird registration opening in January 2022.

We’re picking up where we left off and have successfully renegotiated contracts that include our primary venue, Harrah’s Lake Tahoe, in Stateline, Nevada. The folks at Harrah’s have been very gracious in rolling over all that was previously negotiated (in 2018) with exceptional room rates, free parking, and complimentary convention space, to name a few. The hotel rooms and convention space are non-smoking and accessible without having to pass through the Casino

Janet Johnson - My husband, Frank Johnson was in a home, and on March 19, 2020, I was advised that I could no longer visit him, which I had done every day. Never mind that the staff came and went every eight hours. After he lapsed in a comma, the staff said I could now come and visit him. They also allowed our son and daughter to be there. Frank died on Aug. 7. I will never get over this forced separation between loved ones. It is cruel.

Roland Emetaz - I just miss the FACE-TO-FACE communication. Screen time is just not the same, so Think Positive-Test Negative. *ON*

National Forest Service Retirees Reunion Update

area. With Harrah’s just a few blocks from Lake Tahoe and within walking distance of many shops, restaurants, and other attractions, this will be a perfect place for us to gather.

Our upcoming efforts will include fundraising, which is an essential piece in locking in events and helping offset costs, making every effort to insure reasonable registration fees to encourage maximum attendance. If you are considering a donation, the sooner the better as we’ve targeted October 1 to finalize fee schedules and other associated costs. Please consider supporting these efforts with a credit card donation secured through PayPal on our Reunion website. While we acknowledge all the difficulties that 2020 put into play, we know our retirees to have incredible resilience and enthusiasm to *reconnect*explore*appreciate; our byline that is proving more appropriate than ever.

Stay tuned for updated contact information as minor adjustments may need to be made to eliminate confusion between 2021 and 2022 labels; especially with respect to Google searches. That said, I’m sure you can still find us as we look forward to seeing you in 2022! *ON*

Memories

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

Ruth Walden Metlen, 92, of Baker City, passed away on Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at a local care facility. Ruth was born on November 7, 1928 in Chicago, Illinois, to Lee and Ninon (Wright) Walden. OR. She graduated high school in Chicago and attended Idaho State University.



She married her one true love, Robert W. Metlen on August 15, 1947. Ruth was a substitute schoolteacher. She was a devoted wife and mother to her three children. She enjoyed skiing, horseback riding, camping, gardening, reading and bible study groups. She received an award for National Ski Patroller 1963-1995 and First Aid Instructor from The American Red Cross. She was preceded in death by her husband, Robert, and sister, Carol Jean McDonald.

Jim Torrence followed his Lord into the next life on November 14, 2020. True to the man he was, he left quietly. His wife Elizabeth (Liz), the woman whom he reminded friends was his comfort and his joy, was by his side in their home near Gainesville, Florida. Jim attended Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, and graduated with a degree in forest management; he worked summers for the Forest Service.

After college, Jim served in the Army and Army Reserves. Jim returned to the Ochoco National Forest, before transferring to the Wallowa-Whitman and Winema Forests, and later to the Regional Office to work on environmental impact statements. In 1972 he became supervisor on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Forest and then went to the Washington Office to work on winter sports recreation sites.

It was in this capacity that Jim went to Irkutsk, Siberia, as a member of a U.S. Information Agency. Jim came close to death when he suffered severe stomach pain and was treated by Russian medical staff with several blood transfusions. The American doctor sent with the team,

Dr. William Knaus, wrote a book and an article in Esquire magazine about how the Soviet government made unprecedented concessions to allow an Air Force plane into their air space to transport Jim back to the United States.

After convalescing, Jim went to the Superior National Forest in 1975 in Region 9 as a forest supervisor. In 1977 he was appointed deputy regional forester in Region 6, and in 1983, he became the regional forester in Region 2. He returned to Region 6 as regional forester in the spring 1986.

One of Jim's favorite memories was riding with the Forest Service pack string in the Portland Rose and Flower Parade and in the Pendleton Roundup. In 1989, Jim retired from the Forest Service. After retirement, he and Liz lived in Anacortes, Washington. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth and two sons, Michael and Gregor. Jim's final wishes were cremation and his ashes interred at the Willamette Military Cemetery near Portland, Oregon.

Marshall David Sanders, 82, from Caldwell, Idaho, passed away peacefully at home on November 16, 2020. Marshall enjoyed a distinguished career in the USFS and was a member of the Oregon Air National Guard, retired. He is survived by his wife, Mary Jean Sanders.

Robert Loren Ethington was born February 13, 1932, at State Center, Iowa. He served in the US Army in 1952-53. Upon return from that tour of duty, he and Ellen Marie Maddox were married in Ruthven, Iowa, on June 13, 1954. Two children, Teresa and Sheryl, were born of the marriage, and later resulted in five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.



After leaving the army, Ethington enrolled at Iowa State University where he completed degrees in wood technology and in

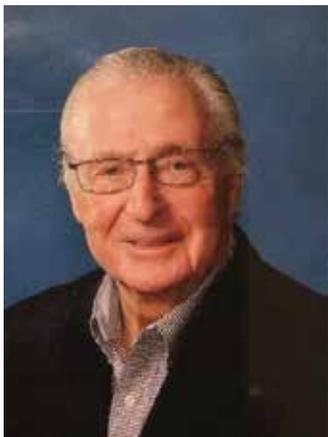
theoretical and applied mechanics. His career included 11 years as a scientist at the US Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, followed by two years as assistant director for that laboratory.

In 1976, he and Ellen moved to Washington D.C., where Bob was director of forest products and harvesting research for the Forest Service. In 1980 they moved to the Portland, Oregon, area, where he was director of the Pacific Northwest Research Station of the Forest Service. He retired from federal service in Portland in late 1987. He and Ellen moved to Corvallis, Oregon, where he worked five years as head of the Forest Products Department at Oregon State University. Bob retired from the university in 1994 and served on the Board of Review of the American Lumber Standard Committee from 1994 through 2013.

Old Smokey John Laurence shares "I have fond memories of Bob from when I was a program manager and the line officer for the Corvallis Lab. Bob would come visit with Bob Buckman and from time-to-time, they would invite me to join them. It was fun to listen to FS history as told by the Bobs. They also had occasional advice for me...especially Buckman."

Old Smokey Bill Funk says, "I also have fond memories of Bob during the '80s when I was the director of our IT group and during the implementation of the Data General computers during the '80s."

Neil B. Opsal passed away at the age of 90 on November 24, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Ginny; daughter, Tracey (Randy Anderson), and granddaughter, Megan. He was predeceased by first wife, Mary and son Todd. Ginny brought to their marriage a whole stepfamily of kids, grandkids, sister, nephews, and wives, who all loved Neil.



He earned his master's in forestry from the University of California-Berkeley and enjoyed a lifetime career with the Forest Service. He served in the US Army. Mondays were sacred because he loved and played golf on that day.

Old Smokey Bob Williams says "I had the good fortune to know Neil. He was personnel director in Region 4 in, I think, the late 60s and early 70s, and then in the same position in Region 6 in the early 70s. I got a good 'talking to' in about 1973 because I turned down a move from Region 4 to Region 6. A fine professional who really cared about the people of the outfit. I have good memories of him."

Old Smokey Bill Funk recalls, "Neil was a support and mentor to a young neophyte director (me) in Region 6 starting in 1979 through the 1980s. And yes, as Bob said, I'd get those thorough 'good talkings to.' I had/have great respect for Neil."

Ken Cochran passed away on January 27, 2021. Old Smokey Ann Page and Fred Page first met Ken and Joyce, his wife, when they moved to the Powers Ranger District in 1969.

Prior to Powers, Ken worked on the Steamboat Ranger District. Later stations were in Oakridge, Oregon; Randle, Washington; and the Gifford Pinchot Station Office in Vancouver, where he retired. After retirement, the couple moved to southern Illinois, but Ken returned to Oregon last fall; Joyce, predeceased him. Ken is survived by a daughter Annette of Eugene, and a son Kerry of Seattle. *Editor's Note:* Thank you to Ken's daughter Annette for sharing word of his passing.

Charles Robert "Chuck" Malcolm, age 82, passed away on September 11, 2020, in Pendleton, Oregon, surrounded by his family. Chuck was proud of his Scottish heritage. After graduating from Norwich University, Vermont, as a second lieutenant in 1959, he served at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, then moved to Oregon to be a civil engineer for the US Forest Service, which often allowed him to work outdoors—a passion for Chuck. While working near Blue River, Oregon, Chuck met his future wife Judith Harman, and they married in 1962 in Eugene, Oregon.

After several years in Sweet Home and Klamath Falls, Oregon, Willard and Vancouver, Washington, the couple settled in Pendleton in 1974 and have been there ever since. They raised their three children there and Chuck continued to work for the US Forest Service until his retirement in 1992. Chuck will be remembered for his quick wit. Often the favorite of nurses and at small gatherings, his swift and unexpected jokes kept people laughing to the end. He will also be remembered for his

passion for fishing and hunting, which he passed on to several of his children and grandchildren.

Frank Ferrarelli, 89, of Pleasant Grove, California, passed away peacefully at his home on May 18, 2020, after a lengthy illness. He was married to his wife Joyce for 64 and a half years. He is sadly missed by his family and many friends. *Editor's Note:* Thank you to Joyce for sharing word of his passing.

Claude Reginald Elton was born on February 14, 1925 and passed away on December 7, 2020. Claude was born and raised in Montana. He joined the US Navy and served with distinction during WWII and the Korean War.



He married Shirley Mae Hammer in 1947 and celebrated their love until her death in 2011. After his service in the Navy, he returned to Montana and graduated from the University of Montana. His career with the US Forest Service took him to many duty locations across the country.

No matter where he lived, he made the best of it and always just fit in. His love of family, friends and God was unwavering. His kindness to others was genuine, one of his greatest gifts that was passed to everyone that knew him.

Fran Sutherland passed away June 5 at Sequim Health and Rehabilitation after a short illness. She was 98 years old. She graduated from high school in John Day, Oregon, in 1935 and graduated from Western Beauty College in Portland, Oregon, one year later.

She then worked as a beautician for two years before moving to Corvallis, Oregon, to attend Oregon State College. She met and married Dr. W.R. Jones, a veterinarian at the college. She had her son, R. Gregg Jones, and then moved back to John Day after a divorce.

Fran continued working as a beautician and also played piano in a seven-piece dance band that toured central Oregon. She met her second husband, Old Smokey H. Donald Miller, a Forest Service ranger, at one of the dances and married in 1945. For the next couple of

decades, they moved with the Forest Service all over the state of Oregon and to Atlanta, Georgia, eventually settling in Enterprise, Oregon.

Early in retirement, Don passed away from cancer in 1988 after 43 years of marriage. Two years later, Fran married Jim Sutherland, and they spent 12 years pursuing interests in photography and traveling around the United States before he passed away from cancer in 2006. Fran was a lifetime member of the Order of the Eastern Star, Elks Club and Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary.

Bertha Elouise "Becky" Foiles, a lifelong Catholic, died Aug. 26. She was 94. Mrs. Foiles was born Oct. 9, 1920, in Decatur, Illinois. She married Old Smokey Otis Wilson "Pete" Foiles in 1940 at St. Leander Church. She lived in several cities in Oregon, but the longest in Portland. In each community, she volunteered at the local Catholic Church.

At St. Clare Parish in Portland, she served as lector and Eucharistic Minister for many years. She was also an Oblate at Mount Angel Abbey. She was preceded in death by her husband and two sons Robert and Michael.

Betty Irene Palmer, 80, of John Day passed away Monday August 8 in Canyon City at the Serenity Adult Foster home. She married Old Smokey Orin F. Palmer on December 19, 1953 in Unity, Oregon; they then had four sons.



She truly enjoyed golf, family, friends, and travelling to Hawaii. She was a lifetime member of the John Day Golf Club, Elk's Club, and the Lion's Club. Betty had two great joys in her life: her family and her friends.

She was an amazing wife, mother, and was very proud of her grandchildren and great grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her husband of 60 years Orin F. Palmer, son Randall W. Palmer, and brother Kenneth Edwards. *ON*



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Spring Banquet Update

Our in-person spring banquet has been canceled this year due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. We will email details on a virtual Zoom meeting that will be held instead on Sunday, May 16 at 3 pm.

The *OldSmokeys Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association (PNWFSA) for the benefit of its members and various offices of the U.S. Forest Service in Region 6. Copies are also made available to all other U.S. Forest Service retiree organizations. Annual PNWFSA membership is \$20. Lifetime membership is \$250. You can find the requirements for membership eligibility and how to apply at www.oldsmokeys.org/join - or reach us by email to membershipapp1@oldsmokeys.org or mail at PNWFSA, P.O. Box 5583, Portland, Oregon 97228-5583.

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