# SOUTH CASCADE DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT 2006



Rocky Top #5 - 8/7/06 Photo by Jim Basting

# From the District Forester...

The 2006 Annual Report for the South Cascade District highlights the programs implemented by the Oregon Department of Forestry and acknowledges the dedicated staff who implement these programs to fulfill ODF's mission.

Our initial attack crews, fire program managers, and District personnel who provide overhead/administrative support were up to the challenge that Fire Season 2006 delivered. While May and June were mild and wet, after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July – the rains disappeared and conditions became increasingly hotter and dryer. The mid-July Paddock Lane fire in Sweet Home was guite active for so early in our season. Then on August 7<sup>th</sup>, a lightning storm rolled North up the Cascade Range, skipped over Eastern Lane and hammered the Sweet Home unit with lightning strikes. Staff who have a long history of fire fighting in the Sweet Home unit had never seen anything quite like it. At this time I was working on a developmental assignment in the Private Forest program in Salem. Travis Medema, from the Eastern Oregon Area office, had agreed to step in a Acting District Forester. He was very impressed to see how well the District firefighters, staff, landowners and cooperators all rallied to deal with the multiple fires set by that storm. Here in South Cascade District, we place a high value on the cooperative efforts that make up our fire suppression program.

Fire indices continued to worsen with no summer rain to lessen the concern. The perfect combination of East winds, low humidity, tough terrain, and high temperatures caused the Middle Fork fire to take off on September 1<sup>st</sup>. Once again, everyone rallied to assist Sweet Home with the fire suppression efforts. We can not thank everyone enough for their assistance through this trying time. Local landowners, out of district resources from the East side, Southern Oregon and NW Oregon, USFS, BLM, operators, Linn County Parks, Linn County Sheriff, ODF Fire Team 3, and the local businesses were all part of the "complete and coordinated" system as we dealt with such a large fire.

Behind the scenes, the district embarked on new planning efforts. Fiscal year 2007 marked the first year that one budget was established and the administrative split from North Cascade District was complete. We started on a Level of Protection review with the ELFPA and LFPA boards of directors. This ongoing effort is intended to be a planning tool in assessing district protection capability, readiness, effectiveness, efficiencies, and internal/external considerations as well as social, political and financial impacts to local fire protection. As a result, we identified a need to formalize a Landowner Activation Plan, which provides a method of operation for notification and mobilization of Landowner personnel and resources, to assist the District at times when district resources are significantly depleted, or committed to multiple incidents.

As a District, we did manage to have some fun this year, in spite of a tough fire season. In June we held an all employee meeting, which for the first time, brought all seasonal employees together to work on some training and teamwork activities. The ELFPA and LFPA summer tours to the McKenzie river basin and Quartzville areas were well attended and enjoyed by all. Kevin Crowell was honored by Marvin Brown with a 30 year service award thanks for your dedication! Dan Shults, Southern Oregon Area Director, volunteered to drive an engine in the Springfield Christmas parade. And we ended the year with a retirement party for Linda Smith, Eastern Lane's long time office specialist.

Again I can't say Thank You enough to the district staff, all those who support us at home, the landowners we serve, and the many cooperators. Together, we are able to overcome the tough situations that life throws at us.

## Lena Tucker

## **Fire Prevention**

## **Sweet Home Unit**

Sweet Home Unit personnel in cooperation with the Sweet Home and Detroit Ranger Districts carried out the annual Smokey Bear Fire Prevention school programs in Sweet Home and Lebanon areas. Students in Sweet Home and Lebanon areas were presented a fire prevention message at their school and had an opportunity to meet Smokey Bear. Smokey and his helpers handed out fire prevention materials to 833 students this year.

This year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Smokey Bear fourth grade fire prevention poster contest. Fourth grade students in the Sweet Home area are invited to participate in making a poster that promotes fire safety in forest activities. A total of 217 students made posters, with three grand prize posters selected. These posters were made into large bill boards by the Sweet Home High School art class and displayed along three major corridors that lead to forest land in East Linn County.



Unit personnel participated in the Lebanon Fire Department's Annual "Fireman's" Appreciation Day. Defendable space was the topic for the general public with a display and handouts. Approximately 325 people visited our display. Local Unit personnel participated in Sweet Home's Sportsman Holiday Parade with a fire prevention themed float. Smokey Bear made his last appearance at Happy Valley Tree Farm's Tree Day, a long running small woodlands event that promotes tree farming and fire prevention. Tree Day is being cancelled after this year. Smokey mingled with participants shaking hands and receiving hugs from both kids and adults. Approximately 300 people attended and enjoyed Smokey. The Sweet Home fire crew participated with Weyerhaeuser Aviation in a fire fighting demonstration which showed how ground firefighters work closely with water dropping helicopters.



## **Eastern Lane Unit**

Eastern Lane staff continued their active participation and support of the Lane County Fire Prevention Cooperative. The Cooperative is a partnership between ODF, USFS and many local Fire Departments. This group participates in home shows, school education projects, weekend displays at the local malls, and many other opportunities.

The Eastern Lane Prevention staff participated in 12 large public events, which included parades, festivals, shows, and exhibits. Through these 12 events nearly 10,000 people were directly contacted. This year we were also able to reach large numbers of people with the presentation of public service announcements broadcast on KEZI in conjunction with Lane Fire Prevention COOP and the Lane County Community Wildfire Prevention Plan steering committee. The PSA's included messages about creating defensible space around homes and fire prevention efforts.

Eastern Lane participated in the Eastern Lane County Elementary school fire prevention program with the USFS prevention staff at 12 schools resulting in 31 class room visits (of 30-45 minutes per room) for 781 kids. Response from the teachers has been very positive and supportive of continuation of this project each year.

The Unit's Forest Officers maintained and managed placement of 190 Fire prevention signs. In addition, two new Keep Oregon Green signs were placed on Highways 126 and 58. The Forest Officers also conducted daily prevention patrols making over 800 public and landowner contacts. Additional events that Eastern Lane fire prevention staff participated in include:

- Sky Camp
- Kids Jam
- Creswell Parade
- Springfield's Children's Celebration
- Bohemia Mining Days
- Golden Days
- Science Center presentation w/ Smokey
- Leaburg Festival
- Blackberry Jam Parade
- Mary Cole Days
- Lane County Fair
- Walterville Parade
- Head Start classes
- Creswell High School
- Gateway Christmas display w/ Smokey
- Springfield Christmas Parade



## **PROTECTION FROM FIRE**

Fire Season 2006 and the Annual Interagency Fire School began on 6/26/06.



This last week in June had abnormally warm temperatures which tested the fire school students as they conducted their field fire training. Public use restrictions were put into place for the Quartzville Corridor area at the same time. Regulated Use restrictions went into effect in the lower elevations of the district on 7/19/06; and the higher elevations went in conjunction with the USFS on 8/18/06.

Great communication and coordination efforts occurred all summer long between the two units. Crews were moved seamlessly between offices based on needs and fire activity. Coordination among landowners and cooperators worked very well this summer for suppression and prevention efforts. We appreciated the assistance of ODF district personnel and equipment that came from throughout the state as our district became ever more challenged by the above normal fire activity.

## Sweet Home Unit

The Sweet Home Unit began fire season expecting our normal smattering of small fires. Our first fire of consequence was the 5 acre Paddock Lane fire that occurred on July 26. Weyerhaeuser's helicopter, Sweet Home's dozer, a contract dozer, plus help from Eastern Lane resources were needed to suppress the fire.



On August 7, 2006, lightning storms passed through the Unit boundary tracking a line that crossed over Wiley Creek and ran North up the divide between Quartzville Creek and the Middle Santiam. The storm started 17 fires all of which were contained quickly except for two blazes. Our 10 year average for lightning fires is 2! The Boulder Creek and Rocky Top #5 fires grew in size and complexity in old growth timber on steep inaccessible terrain. Local Unit fire personnel supplemented with inmate crews, out-of-district engines, and overhead battled the fires for four days until a Type III fire fighting organization took the fires over for the next two weeks to complete containment and mop up. Boulder Creek Fire burned 63 acres and Rocky Top #5 fire burned 28 acres.



On September 1, 2006, at 10:00 A.M. a small column of smoke was reported in the Middle Santiam drainage. The fire grew quickly and at initial attack the fire was reported to be 20 plus acres.

Again Unit fire personnel fought the fire using helicopters, airtankers, dozers, engines and hand crews but with temperatures near 90 degrees, strong East wind and low humidity the fire grew quickly. By mid afternoon it had grown to several hundred acres when it hit steep ground around Rocky Top Mountain and began to spread rapidly. A Type I Incident Management Team was ordered and on September 2, 2006, ODF Fire Team 3 was in place to handle the fire suppression activities. The Middle Fork Fire burned 1070 acres.

The Sweet Home Unit experienced 51 statistical fires burning 1181 acres. We also had 2 non-statistical fires and 90 non fire crew actions.

## Eastern Lane Unit



Cottage Grove operations were thrown a curve ball at the start of the season when we were notified that the Saginaw RFD station was not going to be available to stage our fire crews for the south end of the district. Contact was made with USFS Cottage Grove Ranger district where the ODF crews were invited in with welcome arms. The CGRD opened up their compound, made work space available for the ODF crews. Our crews were also integrated into the USFS morning weather and safety briefings. Engines were able to be parked and secured at night behind locked gates on the CGRD compound. This reciprocal relationship was demonstrated throughout the summer as

both agency crews provided mutual aid response to wildfires.

The 8/7/06 Lightning storm resulted in a number of fires primarily on USFS ground. Eastern Lane responded to only 2 lightning caused fires on state protected lands. The remainder of the lightning fires stretched the USFS resources beyond their capacity and Eastern Lane staff became actively involved with suppression efforts on USFS fires that were in close proximity to state protected lands.

Unfortunately, Eastern Lane also experienced a summer of arson related incidents. Eastern Lane staff were kept busy with arson sets in both the North and South portions of the unit. An Arson task force was developed with OSP, RFD's, ODF, OSFM, and contact with USFS investigators to provide a greater enforcement presence in those problems areas.

Towards the end of fire season, Eastern Lane fire staff accomplished one Wildland Fire training/habitat burn at Mt. Pisgah. This controlled burn reduced fuel loading while providing a training opportunity for a number of the unit staff and local RFD's.



The Eastern Lane Unit experienced 58 statistical fires burning 30 acres. We also had 21 non-statistical fires and 78 non fire crew actions.

Fire Season 2006 lasted 123 days, the longest since 2002, and ended on 10/26/06.

## **National Fire Plan Implementation**

## **Sweet Home Unit**

The Sweet Home Unit was awarded a National Fire Plan grant by the federal government in 2004, for the purpose of providing education, technical advice and assistance to wildland urban interface (WUI) homeowners and for forest fuels treatments to promote forest health and survivable space around structures. The grant also provided the means to improve existing wildland and structure firefighting water sources around communities at risk. In 2006, the following projects and activities occurred:

Fire risk structural assessments were completed on 250 homes. Educational materials were also provided to the occupants. The ultimate doal. in cooperation with Brownsville, Lebanon and Sweet Home fire districts, is to do risk assessments on all WUI structures and then continue updating the assessments in the future.

An educational homeowner fire prevention and defensible space exhibit was put on display at the Annual Sweet Home Spring Event sponsored by the Sweet Home Tree Commission.

Fuel reduction activities were conducted around 6 WUI homes.

Two acres of commercial thinning slash was treated with a commercial chipper near a WUI home and along a county road.

WUI fire prevention posters were posted in WUI communities along public highways.

Plastic shopping bags and card holder wallets with a wildfire home survival education message were purchased. Small retail grocery stores in Lebanon, Brownsville, Lacomb, Waterloo and Sweet Home were provided 40,000 bags for customer use. Sporting goods businesses in Lebanon and Sweet Home that are agents of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for the issuing of hunting and fishing licenses received 16,000 card holder wallets.

A non-industrial forest landowner constructed three water resource sites on parcels within two WUI communities. A 20,000 gallon pump chance and 38,000 gallon helipond/pump chance were constructed in the Upper Berlin area and a 75,000 gallon helipond/pump chance was constructed near Peterson Butte.



## **Eastern Lane Unit**

Currently, two active National Fire Plan grants (Eastern Lane and Upper Willamette) and one active Western States Fire Managers grant (Row-Mosby) are being administered by the National Fire Plan Coordinator at the Eastern Lane Unit.

Tom Berglund assisted with National Fire Plan coordination during the spring and summer efforts until we could fill the position with a full time position. Interviews were held and CarrieAnn Capp was selected to fill the National Fire Plan Coordinator position. CarrieAnn is responsible for administering community education and fuels reduction grants within the Eastern Lane Unit.

Two Home Assessment Crew members were hired to work under Title 3 funding provided by Lane County Commissioners for the Lane Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This 2 person crew worked from mid June through December making door to door visits, providing Firewise pamphlets, wildfire risk assessment information, and educating the homeowners on how they can create defensible space around their homes.

Greg worked with the Lane Community Wildfire Prevention Plan (CWPP) steering committee to facilitate a RAC Grant application to develop an educational FIREWISE program and work group at the McKenzie High School. We also developed 3 other RAC proposals that were presented to the local RAC committees resulting in funding for 2 fuels reduction projects and 1 water development program in Eastern Lane County to begin in 2007.

Home assessment work in the Upper Willamette area was completed in November of 2006, with data and photo points collected for over 3,200 homesites. CarrieAnn is compiling data to provide to the Upper Willamette Steering Committee, who will review the wildfire home hazard assessment data collected, and work toward the completion of the Upper Willamette Implementation plan.

A public service announcement campaign was launched in late December 2006, under the Row-Mosby Community Fire Planning, Education, and Fuels Reduction Project grant. Utilizing local newspapers, television and radio stations. PSAs were distributed to inform the greater Cottage Grove community of our ongoing efforts with regard to home hazard assessments and upcoming public meetings to provide information about the resources being made available through ODF administration of the Row-Mosby grant to interested and proactive landowners. Public meetings began December 2006 and will continue throughout the winter in the greater Cottage Grove area. Letters are being sent to homeowners in the area to inform them of our activities as they relate to wildfire home hazard assessments.



## Private Forests Program

## **Sweet Home Unit**

In 2006, our Stewardship Foresters provided a range of services to our customers through administration of the Forest Practices Act and general forestry assistance to landowners in the Private Forests Program. Neal Bond's responsibilities included a large forest practices area and unit GIS coordination, while Jim Ewing managed the forestry assistance programs and a smaller forest practices area for the Sweet Home Unit. The foresters attended several training sessions throughout the year to enhance their knowledge for better fulfilling job responsibilities.

Community involvement was once again something that Stewardship Foresters were very involved with. Some of the activities that Stewardship Foresters participated in included: Tree Day in Sweet Home, providing education and Forest Practices Training for operators at the OPL and AOL sessions, and they continued working with watershed councils. In addition, both Jim and Neal were very involved with firefighting efforts during the 8/7 Lightning Complex.

## **Forest Practices**

2006 was a dynamic and productive year for Forest Practices on the Sweet Home Unit of the South Cascade District. There was an increase in the number of notifications that were received and reviewed by Stewardship Foresters. The total number of notifications received in 2006 was 834, up 29 notifications from last year. With this increase in notifications, stewardship foresters also increased their pre-operations and active operations inspections for a total of 831. With the increase in inspections. Stewardship Foresters were able to work with landowners and operators to ensure compliance with the Forest Practices Act. Stewardship Foresters also received and

reviewed 83 written plans and 1 plan for an alternate practice. These written plans were for operations that were very close to critical resources. Due to a conscientious effort by the landowners and operators, they were able to work without causing damage to the resources. Fire inspections were very high on the priority list for Stewardship Foresters in 2006. Throughout the long, dry, hot summer of 2006, there were a total of 130 fire inspections conducted.

## Forestry Assistance

Landowner assistance was both challenging and rewarding in 2006. Jim performed various tasks including education, program selection, inter-agency coordination, plan development, program compliance, and tax credits.



Service Forestry Accomplishments:

General Forestry/Technical Assistance: 23 clients - 554 acres Oregon Tax Credits: 6 preliminary - 61 acres; 6 final - 162 acres Tree Farm Recertification: 140,000 acres CREP : 6 proposals, 2 projects, 2 completions FLEP: 2 project plans - 52 acres 1 project completion - 38 acres

## The Oregon Plan

Stewardship Foresters assisted landowners in meeting "The Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds" objectives by providing technical assistance in the planning process. For the year 2006, a total of 3 non-fish passable culverts were replaced with improved fish passable culverts. Work occurred in the Mohawk and Calapooia River basins. Nearly 2 miles of habitat are now either accessible or improved for adult and juvenile migration of cutthroat trout as a result of these projects.



Jim Ewing is the ODF representative on the Upper Willamette ESA Salmon Recovery Planning Team, which is developing salmon and steelhead recovery plans (2006-07) for the Upper Willamette River and each major tributary. Each plan will provide various initiatives involving Oregon Plan implementation.

The Oregon Plan is promoted through the collaborative efforts of a number of forestry organizations including the Associated Oregon Loggers, Oregon Forest Industries Council, Oregon Small Woodlands Association, Oregon Forest Resources Institute, and the Oregon Department of Forestry. Educational programs aimed at furthering the knowledge of operators and landowners about voluntary actions that can be done to enhance fish habitat and watersheds are the main components of the Oregon Plan. Stewardship Foresters also strive to convey these opportunities to do enhancement actions with operators and landowners during the pre-operation and active operation inspections.

#### **Eastern Lane**

The Unit saw some changes this past year. Mark Slaten left the District in December of 2005 to take a position in Montana. During Mark's absence Tim Meehan (NRS1) filled the developmental position until he was promoted in May 2006.

The year brought an 8% increase in notifications to Eastern Lane Unit, with a total of 1276 for the year and 226 renewals. The 1276 notifications came with 352 written plans to be reviewed. The Private forests program completed 1175 field visits for pre-operation and active operation inspections, and 73 industrial fire inspections.

The stewardship foresters were involved with many interesting projects this past year. Marvin Vetter instructed at the Fire Officers School at Valley River Inn and for Associated Oregon Loggers. Marvin also facilitated a meeting between Weyerhaeuser Co. South Valley operations and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to out plant adult Chinook salmon in the Mosby Creek drainage.



In March, Tim and Marvin assisted Giustina Resources with a Pleasant Hill elementary

tree planting project on their Minnow Creek tree farm.



In April, Marvin and Tim joined Coos and Western Lane Districts for a 1 day forest practices tour with Salem staff to help build consistency regarding different forest practices issues. In April, Marvin attended an Archeological and Cultural Resource training sponsored by the department and the State Historical and Preservation Office in the Columbia Gorge.

The Eastern Lane stewardship foresters serve as the main contact for general forestry assistance questions. Projects that require extensive time are assigned to Bob Johnson from the Western Lane office.

The stewardship foresters also assisted with many fire dispatches this past summer, Marvin, who is an operations section chief, was sent to Central Oregon District and the Sweet Home unit for the Middle Fork Fire with Incident Management Team 3. Tim assisted the District with the Eastern Lane Lightning Complex in early August.

#### **District Smoke Management**

We are extremely happy to report that there were no smoke management intrusions in 2006. This was made possible by the dedication and hard work of the landowners and operators. Their willingness to drop everything and burn with little notice when the winds were coming from the correct direction made the difference. The valued relationship between the Oregon Department of Forestry and the landowners made for another win-win situation and a successful year for Smoke Management!

#### **Smoke Management Accomplishments**

Sweet Home: Total tons 95,563

Total acres 3,500

#### Eastern Lane

Total tons 53,679 Total acres 2,391

## **Cooperative Work**

## **Sweet Home Unit**

Four Sweet Home and three Santiam personnel combined to do the annual fall industrial pile burning. The crew worked for six cooperators burning 469 acres of piles. All activities were accident free.



The D-6 dozer was used for a total of 67.2 hours by ODOT for winter rock stock piles and leveling of dirt piles. It was also used to construct placement of cinder at the Santiam Junction sand shed.

#### **Eastern Lane Unit**

Eastern Lane and ODOT continued the long standing cooperative program which provided full-time employment for three seasonal employees from the unit during the winter of 2006. Two of these positions became permanent, full time positions providing guaranteed work for two Forest Officers who will be funded by ODOT to work their busy winter season and by ODF to fight wildfires in the summer.

Eastern Lane continued the cooperative arrangement with the Willamette National Forest for the Prevention Engine in the Lowell area. During normal patrols many valuable prevention contacts were made in an area which has both heavy wildlandurban interface and recreational use.

The Spring co-op season of 2006 also provided 335 hours of work to seasonal employees who would have been otherwise unemployed. The main project included fish stream surveys for cooperators, and also some fertilizer projects.



The Fall 2006 co-op season provided another 475 hours of work for seasonal employees who would have been laid off with the close of fire season. They provided much needed help for cooperators, primarily with slash burning.

The dozer was utilized under the National Fire Plan Fuel reduction grant to construct a fuel break along Marcola Road below the SkyHigh housing development.

During the Spring, Weyerhaeuser Springfield and South Valley had their fire trucks inspected, filled and placed back into fire service, along with stocked with fire equipment by ODF employees. During the Fall, their fire caches were winterized and annual maintenance of pumps, hose, tools, and equipment completed.

Elmer Shew assisted with Oregon State Parks as a Chain Saw trainer in Sisters and Florence.

Other cooperators involved in the Eastern Lane co-op program in 2006 included: USFS, Eugene BLM, Weyerhaeuser, McArthur and Associates, Oregon State Parks, Giustina Land and Timber, Giustina Resources, Seneca Jones, and Fruit Growers.

## Facilities

## **Sweet Home Unit**

Several major projects were completed in 2006. The ceiling and walls in the East truck shop storage bay were insulated. The truck storage bays were also sheet rocked and painted. The fire foam storage was relocated, giving us more floor room and safer storage. New concrete steps were poured, providing safer access into the rear of the office at the break room and main office entry doors.

Residence number one received new exterior paint. Exterior wooden doors on the warehouse and crew house were treated with a preservative. Residence number two had a new rear entry door and screen door installed and a water leak at the water meter repaired.

## **Eastern Lane Unit**

Facility maintenance kept our folks quite busy this past year. Following are just a few of the highlights.

The driveway into the HQ office parking lot was completed and the Main Street entrance from the parking lot was closed off. Now the entrance is accessed from 32<sup>nd</sup> street between Les Schwab and ODFW. A very qualified and economical architect was located and services retained for the Aframe repairs and the Holeman Guard Station Living quarters. The fire crew worked with a contractor to remove the rotten base section of the A-frame beams that support the roof cover over the front entrance and installed cement block piers. The fire crew wrapped up the bathroom remodel project with new showers in the warehouse. The fire crew upgraded the warehouse entrance and decking and constructed a safer set of stairs.

We were really excited to start construction on the living quarters addition to the Holeman Guard Station in December.



Holeman Guard Station

## Administrative Staff

Eastern Lane and Sweet Home Administration staff worked very hard on implementing new procedures, new computer programs and maintaining a professional, positive, efficient atmosphere for all employees and customers. They were also kept extremely busy with managing the fire finances from the 8/7 Lightning Complex and Middle Fork Fire. Linda Smith, Office Specialist 2, retired at the end of December with over 15 years of service. She worked on fire payment teams, fire school teams and finance management teams. Her expertise and cheerful attitude will be missed!



Linda Smith

Our dispatchers in both units were kept very busy with the fire season. Both John and Kimi (Sweet Home) had their hands full with the 8/7 Lightning Complex in Sweet Home. Kimi was able to develop her skills in aviation dispatch. Erika (Eastern Lane) had a very successful dispatch season for her first year. Nora LeDoux spent 10 days working in the Lakeview Interagency Dispatch Center.



Erika Hoppe



John Trefethen



Kimi Dixon

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