

2006 FIRE CHRONOLOGY

JANUARY

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 0

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 0

Total Acres – 0

Weather: As if the really wet last half of December weren't wet enough, along came January – one of the wettest and mildest Januaries ever. Some locations set all-time records for total wet days or consecutive wet days. Others set records for most monthly precipitation. The mountains saw rather amazing increases in snowpack. All this adds up to what has been a very wet, windy, wild winter in Oregon. There was extensive flooding, numerous mudslides, and other weather-related problems, in direct contrast to last winter's very dry conditions.

Forest operators go above and beyond to protect Oregon's natural resources. Every year, the Oregon Board of Forestry and the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) selects forest operators who are the "best of the best" to receive special recognition as regional **Operator of the Year Award Winners**. These operators are all conducting their forest operations in a manner that helps protect natural resources, while consistently surpassing Oregon standards of complying with recognized forest management practices. They have displayed innovation and the ability to handle difficult circumstances, expending extra effort and investing some financial risk or sacrifice to produce outstanding results. The 2005 winners were selected by Regional Forest Practices Committee members from their area who had the chance to tour their work sites and learn more about their operations. The 2005 Award winners are:

Paul & Robert Wampler Logging, Inc., Klamath Falls, earned the Eastern Oregon Operator of the Year Award for improving a forest stand near Swan Lake by removing diseased trees and those with poor form and growth. The operation was a partial-cut harvest using ground equipment. A small perennial non-fish bearing stream ran through a steep v-shaped canyon within the harvest area, so the crew used several precautionary measures to protect it. The unit had previously been harvested in the 1950's by skidding the logs down the stream channel because there was little room to do so outside the stream because the ground is especially steep. To overcome this difficulty, Wampler Logging used two temporary stream crossings, and the ski trail was placed higher above the stream channel. The skid trail was created with some slope to fit the contour of the land to avoid cutting into stream banks. These measures protected water quality and the integrity of the stream bed and vegetation.

Davidson Industries, Inc., Mapleton, earned the Northwest Oregon Operator of the Year Award for constructing an innovative landslide diversion berm that was carefully engineered to prevent potential damage to an inhabited downslope dwelling. Because the house, located below their proposed 44-acre harvest operation near Mapleton, was built on an old debris fan from a landslide that occurred several years ago, the berm was designed to deflect future slides away from the dwelling. The design included an overflow channel so that if a slide occurred and the rock culvert became plugged, debris and water would divert away from the house. Much time and many resources were used to carefully place several large boulders in the berm to strengthen it. The process was an expensive one because it took heavy equipment to construct it to the engineer's

specifications, and Davidson Industries really had no way of knowing if the end result would gain the approval of the Oregon Department of Forestry’s geotechs. The operator closely consulted with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to make sure the fabrication of the rock culvert was fish-friendly. The berm’s construction helped retain the productivity of a reach of fish bearing stream. This diligence in working closely with both agencies during their harvesting operations and managing their lands in accordance with the Forest Practices Act has earned Davidson Industries a reputation as a leader in quality harvesting operations in the Siuslaw River Basin.

Tower Timber Services, Inc., Cottage Grove, earned the Southwest Oregon Operator of the Year Award for successfully conducting a complex 90-acre timber harvesting operation in a unit overlooking a stretch of Interstate 5. The operation area included a high landslide hazard location (which was left with the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Oregon Department of Forestry and an engineering geologist to prevent a possible landslide during the operation and ensure that the operation was an operator and his crew went above the requirements of the harvesting plan and left additional trees in the buffer/landslide areas. This, of course, made falling and yarding around them more difficult, and extra care had to be taken to prevent logs from rolling down slope and impacting the scenic corridor, I-5 and the high landslide hazard area. A swing yarder was used to help guide trees away from “leave tree” areas, and “lift” trees were used to gain additional lift on steep slopes to prevent damage to remaining trees. In addition, whole tree yarding was done to keep the slopes free of excess slash (harvesting debris). The operator also took extra time to remove slash from slopes to landing areas, thereby reducing potential fire hazard and improving the site for forestation. While operation with an Industrial Fire Precaution Level 3 waiver, additional fire equipment was brought in and the operator carefully monitored the weather during this time. Tower Timber Services, Inc. has a reputation for not only using the proper equipment to maintain harvest productivity, but for protecting natural resources as well. They work well with neighboring landowners and do their best to address public concerns about their operations. Being proactive and talking to Oregon Department of Forestry and other agencies about their operations beforehand, and consistently exceeding Best Management Practices and Forest Practices Act rules and regulations puts them on the list of top-notch timber operators in Oregon this year.

FEBRUARY

MONTH:

Lightning – 0

Human Caused – 12

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 12

Total Acres – 63.97

Weather: February was mostly dry and mostly cool. A strong outbreak of Arctic air brought very cold temperatures (and some daily temperature records) to the state during the middle of the month. Though mild and somewhat wet conditions occurred both early and late in the month, the dominance of the cold, dry period was adequate to leave the monthly averages of precipitation and temperature below normal throughout the state.

California wildfires were burning in February. A 6,500 acre fire triggered evacuations of more than 2,000 Southern California homes was apparently ignited by remnants of a controlled forest burn that escaped. Despite gusty Santa Ana winds, no homes had been lost in the blaze in northeastern Orange County.

MARCH

MONTH:

Lightning – 0
Human Caused – 14

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires - 14
Total Acres – 70.98

Weather: March was rather a cool month throughout Oregon. Precipitation totals were about equally divided between above- and below- normal temperatures. Oregonians eagerly await the arrival of warm, dry weather.

Fire activity increased across the southern parts of Arizona and New Mexico; Great Plains (Colorado, Kansas); Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio. The Southern Area is at PL3 and nationally we are at PL2. A national Type 1 IMT was dispatched to Kentucky. Heavy air tanker situation: contrary to what we thought last month, we will shortly be down to only 3 heavy air tankers due to mandatory FAA pilot training requirements for Neptune’s pilots. Later this month and through April we will slowly begin to rebuild up to 4 or 5. Availability should increase further in the May/June time period. By June, we should be at full strength (16). SEAT and heavy helicopter availability remains high. Unfortunately, there have been several burnovers in the past couple weeks (Georgia, Colorado, Oklahoma) which resulted in burn injuries, but no fatalities.

APRIL

MONTH:

Lightning – 2
Human Caused – 45

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 47
Total Acres – 88.74

Weather: April was a ‘mixed bag’ month. The first half was generally cool and rather wet, but the last two weeks were considerably warmer and had below-average precipitation for the month.

Tillamook Forest Center opened its doors to the public on April 1st, celebrating the start of Arbor Week. The new visitor and education facility center is located 50 miles west of Portland on the Wilson River Highway (Oregon 6) in the heart of the former “Tillamook Burn,” which is today’s Tillamook State Forest. Admission is free; no tax dollars were used to build the \$10.7 million center. Visitors can explore the past, present and future of the Tillamook State Forest through artifacts, personal stories, photos, film, exhibits, games, hands-on models, computer simulations and interpreter-led programs. The center – with its 40 foot tall replica of a fire lookout and dramatic 250 foot long suspension bridge for pedestrians across the Wilson River – offers visitors an opportunity to see how their lives are connected with forests. Today’s Tillamook State Forest, still recovering from a series of devastating wildfires in the 1930’s and the 1940’s, is regarded as one of the largest forest planting efforts ever undertaken. Following the fires, thousands of Oregonians, many of them schoolchildren and volunteers, helped plant more than 72 million Douglas-fir seedlings across the blackened landscape.

MAY

MONTH:

Lightning – 12
Human Caused – 168

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 180
Total Acres – 288.94

Weather: May was a mild month throughout Oregon with overall near-normal precipitation. Several very powerful thunderstorms rumbled as a result of warm, humid air advecting into Oregon from the southwest. Water conditions continue to be excellent due to a wet winter.

L.O. 110 Slash Fire began on the 4th in North Cascade District, Santiam Unit. The fire was caused by escapement from slash unit escape, burning 180 acres. Six engines, two dozers, two tenders and one 20-person crew were on the scene of the fire.

Engstrom Road Fire began on the 4th in North Cascade District, Santiam Unit. The fire was caused by escapement from slash into 25 year old reprod and scotch broom, burning 24 acres. One dozer, eight engines and four tenders were on the scene.

Oregon Wildfire Awareness Week was held May 7-13. The best way to stop wildfires is to prevent them from starting. To underscore this message, Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski has declared this week as Oregon Wildfire Awareness Week. Throughout the week, state, local, and federal fire agencies will be spreading the word about the major causes of wildfires and the steps Oregonians can take to stop most fires before they start. As Oregon's population continues to expand, more residents are at risk from wildfire. These blazes can move rapidly through brush, grass, trees and destroy homes as well as take lives.

Klamath-Lake and Walker Range Forest Protection Districts entered fire season on the 17th.

Northrup Creek Horse Camp will celebrate the grand opening of Clatsop County's first campground designed for equestrian use. A ribbon cutting ceremony and dedication will be held on the 20th at 11:00 a.m. The campground is near Jewell, in the eastern part of Clatsop County. The new campground offers vault toilets, hand-pumped drinking water and eight campsites with horse corrals, picnic tables and fire rings. Three additional tent sites are available for non-equestrian use. All campsites are \$10 a night and additional vehicles are \$2 each per night. The North Coast Chapter of Oregon Equestrian Trails, a statewide organization of volunteers who advocate for horse camping, helped ODF with the design and construction of Northrup Creek Horse Camp. ODF expects construction of a seven mile loop trail to be completed later in the spring. The trail will be open to horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking. Much of the trail construction is done by South Fork Camp inmate crews.

Southwest Oregon Protection District entered fire season on the 24th.

JUNE

MONTH:

Lightning – 36

Human Caused – 249

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 285

Total Acres – 359.42

Weather: An abundant snowpack and above-average rain this winter and spring have fire managers hopeful that the onset of high fire activity in Oregon will come about three weeks later than normal. The moisture content of large forest fuels (dead trees and logs) is average to above average. This is good news, as these large combustibles are the key ingredient in large, intense wildfires.

Coos Forest Protective Association and Douglas Forest Protective Association entered fire season on the 22nd.

Prineville, John Day and Sisters Units of the Central Oregon Protection District entered fire season on the 24th.

West Oregon Forest Protection District, South Cascade District, and Western Lane Forest Protection District entered fire season on the 26th.

The Dalles Unit of the Central Oregon Protection District, North Cascade District entered fire season on the 28th.

Northwest Oregon Forest Protection District and Northeast Protection District entered fire season June 29th.

JULY

MONTH:

Lightning – 132

Human Caused – 447

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 579

Total Acres – 7,791.65

Weather: Much of July was close to normal, but in the fourth week of the month Oregon experienced a very significant heat wave, leading to uncharacteristically high nighttime temperatures.

George Slash Fire began on the 2nd, five miles east of Estacada in the North Cascade District. The fire was caused by fireworks, burning 50 acres of heavy slash.

Foley Complex (aka Cat Mountain, aka Aubrey and Aubrey Division 2) began on the 5th burning 45 acres in the Central Oregon District, 21 miles north of Prineville. Cause of the fire is unknown, although interagency dispatch centers reported numerous thunderstorms/lightning strikes throughout the state over the past 24 hours, causing many smaller spot fires which were caught while they were small and went into mop-up phase.

White King Fire began on the 11th burning 119 acres of timber, nine miles NW of Lakeview in the Klamath-Lake District. Air attack was called in as the fire was spotting in the 20 MPH winds. Cause of the fire was miscellaneous caused fire.

Heifer Creek Fire started on the 15th in the Pendleton Unit of the Northeast Oregon District, five miles east of Weston. The fire burned 300 acres of grass and brush in steep terrain. Cause of the fire was equipment use. Powder River inmate crews worked through the night to construct line and secure the fire perimeter.

Black Rock Fire burned 549 acres (200 acres were ODF state protected) on the 25th in the John Day Unit of the Central Oregon District. The fire was 22 miles northeast of Burns, burning timber and sage. Cause of the fire was lightning. A BLM team was assigned to the fire.

Spring Creek Fire began on the 25th burning 35 acres of fell and buck in the Tillamook District. Extreme spotting occurred due to winds with a five-acre spot fire ahead of it. Cause of the fire was equipment use.

Black Crater Fire, seven miles southwest of Sisters, burned 9,400 acres after starting on the 23rd; 4,247 of those acres were state protected lands. The fire continued to burn or spot about 3,800 acres of private land. Strong winds pushed the lightning-caused fire resulting in evacuation of the Tollgate subdivision. The Crossroads and Edgington areas were also evacuated. The smoke was so thick in Redmond that air tanker operations were shutdown for a time at the Redmond Airport due to lack of visibility. The Conflagration Act was authorized for this fire on the 27th by the Governor, allowing State Fire Marshal resources to be mobilized to the fire. Dan Shults, ODF Southern Oregon Area Director, was assigned as a Joint Incident Commander on this fire which was being managed by the Northwest Oregon Interagency Management, later transitioning to management by the Southern US Interagency Blue Team.

Elk Mountain Fire began on the 31st in the Wallowa Unit of the Northeast Oregon District, 20 miles north of Enterprise. The fire burned 68 acres of timber and grass. Cause of the fire was debris burning. Two helicopters, two heavy air tankers, three single-engine air tankers, several fire engines, two water tenders, one 20-person crew and a 10-person inmate crew were mobilized.

AUGUST

MONTH:

Lightning – 355

Human Caused – 685

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 1,040

Total Acres – 9,851.22

Weather: August was generally dry throughout Oregon, but much milder than July had been. Minimum temperatures were generally below average statewide; Coastal temperatures were cooler than normal.

Dry Lightning occurred on the 6th, starting dozens of small fires in the Klamath Falls and Lakeview areas. Firefighters were able to stop most of the new starts.

Southwest Oregon District had approximately 30 smokes reported within 24 hours of a lightning storm on the evening of the 6th, resulting in more than 21 fires. **Central Oregon District** reported 60 confirmed fires on the 8th, resulting from the lightning storm on the 7th. The two largest are the **Grub Creek Fire**, approximately 30 acres and east of John Day, and the **50-100 Acre Fire** east of Heppner. **Klamath Lake District** had 14 new fires with the potential of one on the Modoc National Forest in California crossing the border onto ODF protected land. **Douglas Forest Protective Association** had seven fires. **Lightning Complex** began on the 8th burning 20 acres east of Springfield Unit in the South Cascade District. The fire burned trees and brush in the McKenzie and Drainage areas.

8/7 Lightning Bust Complex burned 89 acres, 30 miles northeast of Sweet Home in the South Cascade District. The two lightning caused fires were managed by ODF's Sweet Home Unit with assistance from other ODF resources.

Puzzle Fire (Cascade Crest Complex) burned 5,235 acres in the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness. The Incident Command Post was moved from the Sisters High School to the Hoodoo Ski Resort. Cause of the fire was lightning.

ODF's Incident Management Team 3 was mobilized to the **Two Cabin Complex Fire** in the John Day Unit of Central Oregon District on the evening of the 8th. The complex consisted of six lightning-caused fires, each about 200 acres in size, located 40-50 miles northwest of John Day. The burned 804 acres.

Lake George Fire burned 5,237 acres in the Deschutes National Forest, 13 miles west of Sisters burning big killed Lodge Pole Pine and fir. Dry Creek Trailhead into the Mt. Washington Wilderness was closed including the Pacific Crest Trail to the south and west of Lake George. This was a lightning caused fire which began on August 7th. The Pacific Northwest Team 3 took command of the fire; agencies included USFS, BLM, ODF, 153rd Airlift Wing Air National Guard from Cheyenne, WY. Portions of Highway 242 remained closed due to smoke hazards. This was a lightning caused fire.

Blister Fire burned 735 acres, 25 miles southeast of Molalla. The lightning-caused fire was on the Mt. Hood National Forest, one mile east of ODF-protected BLM land. Cooperating agencies included the USFS, BLM, and ODF.

Mt. Hood Complex was comprised of about 13 lightning-caused fires in the Mt. Hood and Badger Creek wilderness along Highway 35. The 1,859 acre fire was fought by the following cooperating agencies: ODF, USFS, ODOT, and the City of The Dalles.

A Fire Engine was stolen the evening of the 19th from Surco Log, Inc. The engine was stolen from Weyerhaeuser Corporation forestland southwest of Lorane in Lane County where the company was processing logs under contract. The Chevrolet flatbed truck was equipped with a 500-gallon water tank, firehose reel, Honda pump and foam unit, total an estimated \$20,000 loss. Theft of fuel from forest operations is so commonplace, operators must hide their gas cans at the work sites. Forest thieves prefer the convenience of simply taking the cans, but they readily siphon the fuel tanks of trucks and heavy equipment as well. As for tools, their high value and portability make them a must-have item for larcenous forest visitors.

Harlow Springs Fire, 21 miles north of Wallowa burned 25 acres in the Northeast Oregon District. The fire was lightning caused.

Fall Creek Fire began on the 21st burning 125 acres in the Coos Forest Patrol Association District. The fire burned on private lands in steep and rocky terrain, 18 miles east of Reedsport. Cause of the fire was arson related. Type of fuel burned was logging/slash.

Beattle Juice Fire began on the 21st burning 55 acres in the Wallowa Unit of the Northeast Oregon District. The fire burned on flat terrain in a grass area. Cause of the fire was equipment use.

Pine Creek Fire burned 128 acres in the Pendleton Unit of the Northeast Oregon District. The fire was four miles southeast of Ukiah, starting on the 21st. High winds were a concern, burning open pine and grass. Cause of the fire was an equipment caused fire.

Bridge Creek Fire began on the 21st burning 125 acres in the Pendleton Unit of the Northeast Oregon District. The fire was six miles south of Ukiah burning in open pine and grass. Cause of the fire was a lightning caused fire.

Horse Canyon began on the 22nd burning 10 acres in the Pendleton Unit of the Northeast Oregon District. The fire was nine miles south of Ukiah burning grass, open pine and juniper. Cause of the fire was lightning.

Jim Creek Fire began on the 22nd in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The fire burned 1,100 acres only 3 ½ miles from ODF-protected lands in very steep, rugged terrain. Cause of the fire was a lightning caused fire.

Shake Table Complex consisted of nine fires totaling 14,574 acres. Location is 12 miles southeast of Dayville in the area that is a mix of USFS, BLM, private and ODFW (Murderers Creek Wildlife Management Area). Mobilization of ODF's Incident Management Team 2 occurred on the 23rd. Cause of the fire was lightning. The terrain was very steep, rugged country, which made access difficult and slow. There were approximately 1,504 personnel on the fire.

Walther Fire began the evening of the 28th, south of Prineville on BLM land near Prineville Reservoir State Park in the Central Oregon District. The fire burned 150 acres. Crews worked through the night to put a line around the fire. A small lightning storm moved through Central Oregon causing firefighters to fly, drive or hike into approximately ten new fire starts throughout the area.

SEPTEMBER

MONTH:
Lightning – 379
Human Caused – 829

YEAR-TO-DATE:
Total Fires – 1,208
Total Acres – 11,136.40

Weather: September was a dry, mild month, with warm days and cool night. A dramatic cooling occurred mid-month, with Westside temp more than 20 degrees in a day or two, but temperatures rebounded again by the end of the month.

Oregon Fallen Firefighters Memorial dedication ceremony was held September 9th at the new Oregon Public Safety Academy in Salem. This memorial has been in the works for the last 12 years. Many people from agencies across the state have met and provided input into the design and construction of the memorial. This dedication ceremony has begun an annual tradition of remembrance of firefighters who have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving Oregon's citizens. At the ceremony, the names of more than 100 deceased structural and wildland firefighters was read – a list that dates back as far as 1882.

Middle Fork Fire began on the 1st in the Sweet Home Unit of the South Cascade District, 14 miles northeast of Sweet Home. The fire burned 1,075 acres of BLM timber, private timber and reproduction. The fire was in very steep terrain with heavy fuel loadings of down and dead trees. Poor access made suppression difficult. A closure was in effect for the Quartsville Corridor and Green Peter Reservoir connecting the North and South Santiam drainages. Campers were evacuated; camping and boating on the reservoir were restricted. Cause of the fire was lightning.

Tim Keith has been named administrator of the Emergency Fire Cost Committee. Tim replaced Tom Lane, longtime head of the four-member panel, which oversees the Oregon Froest Land Protection Fund. The fund serves as a revenue safety net that covers firefighting costs for large wildfires. Tim, recently retired from his position as assistance state forester for the department's Forest Protection Division. He served 16 years as a commander for the department's incident management teams, made up of skilled firefighting personnel, the teams manage the suppression effort on large wildfires. Tim's most notable assignment came in 2002 when his team was deployed to the Sheldon Ridge Fire. The wind-driven blaze swept through dry grass and brush to the outskirts of The Dalles, where it posted a grave threat to the city for several days.

Elkhorn Complex consisted of three lightning caused fires (Gorham Butte, Bear Butte and Red Mountain) on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and Oregon Department of Forestry's protected lands. The fires are located 16 miles northwest of Baker City, within a 5-mile radius of Anthony Lakes recreation area and ski resort. The Central Oregon Interagency Incident Management Team managed the fire which burned 966 acres.

OCTOBER

MONTH:

Lightning – 386

Human Caused – 949

YEAR-TO-DATE:

Total Fires – 1,335

Total Acres – 11,273.56

Weather: October was a dry, mild month for Oregon.

Rick Gibson has received the Golden Smokey Bear award for his leadership in wildland fire prevention and education. He is the first Oregon Department of Forestry employee to get the national award, which is presented by the USDA Forest Service, National Association of State Foresters and The Advertising Council. Rick has been the fire policy and prevention manager with ODF since 1992, he was recognized for his extensive work through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland Fire Education Working Team. A narrative accompanying the award notes that he "has touched many wildland fire education professionals in our nation and beyond." For the past 14 years, Gibson has represented the western states on the working team, which helps to promote and improve wildfire prevention communications and education for the public as well as members of the fire service. The Golden Smokey Bear is the highest national honor bestowed on wildfire prevention professionals. It is granted for sustained prevention work that is national in scope. Gibson's forestry career began in 1966 as a seasonal firefighter with the Eastern Lane Forest Protective Association. He has held a variety of positions with the department in both forest practices and fire protection.

Cruz Hill Fire began on the 12th burning 7 acres in the Tillamook District. The fire was caused by equipment use, burning fell and buck.

Baker Pond Fire began on the 29th, burning 22 acres. The fire was 11 miles south of Dufur in the Central Oregon District of the The Dalles Unit. The fire was caused by .

NOVEMBER:

MONTH:
Lightning – 386
Human Caused - 958

YEAR-TO-DATE:
Total Fires – 1,344
Total Acres – 11,278.31

Weather: November was a wild, wet and windy month. The record-setting wet weather in the first 10 days included a major wind storm (which knocked down trees and closed some roads), followed by an unusual low-level snow event.

DECEMBER

MONTH:
Lightning – 386
Human Caused – 959

YEAR-TO-DATE:
Total Fires – 1,345
Total Acres – 11,278.32

Weather: December brought another major wind storm. It was also quite wet this month. Temperatures were mostly above average, but not by much.

2006 Fire Season Highlights: Dry lightning storms swept across much of the state during the summer months, igniting hundreds of fires. Initial attack stopped most of the fires at a small size. Large wildfires occurred on federal forestlands, and ODF allocated considerable firefighting resources to aid their partner agencies, BLM and USFS. We assisted with aircraft and fire management personnel on several fires including the Lake George Fire, Black Crater Fire, Blister Fire, Foster Gulch Complex, Alder Creek Fire, Mt. Hood Complex and the Puzzle Fire. The federal agencies reciprocated, on numerous occasions performing initial attack on wildfires on state jurisdiction.

Governor Ted Kulongoski toured the Black Crater Fire, near Sisters on July 29th. In a press conference with ODF and USFS administrators, the governor underscored twin objectives he said the close state-federal cooperation helped to fulfill: minimize losses to the forest resource and prevent destruction of homes in wildland-urban interface areas.

John Boro, Fire Operations Manager, retired from the agency after 30 years of service.