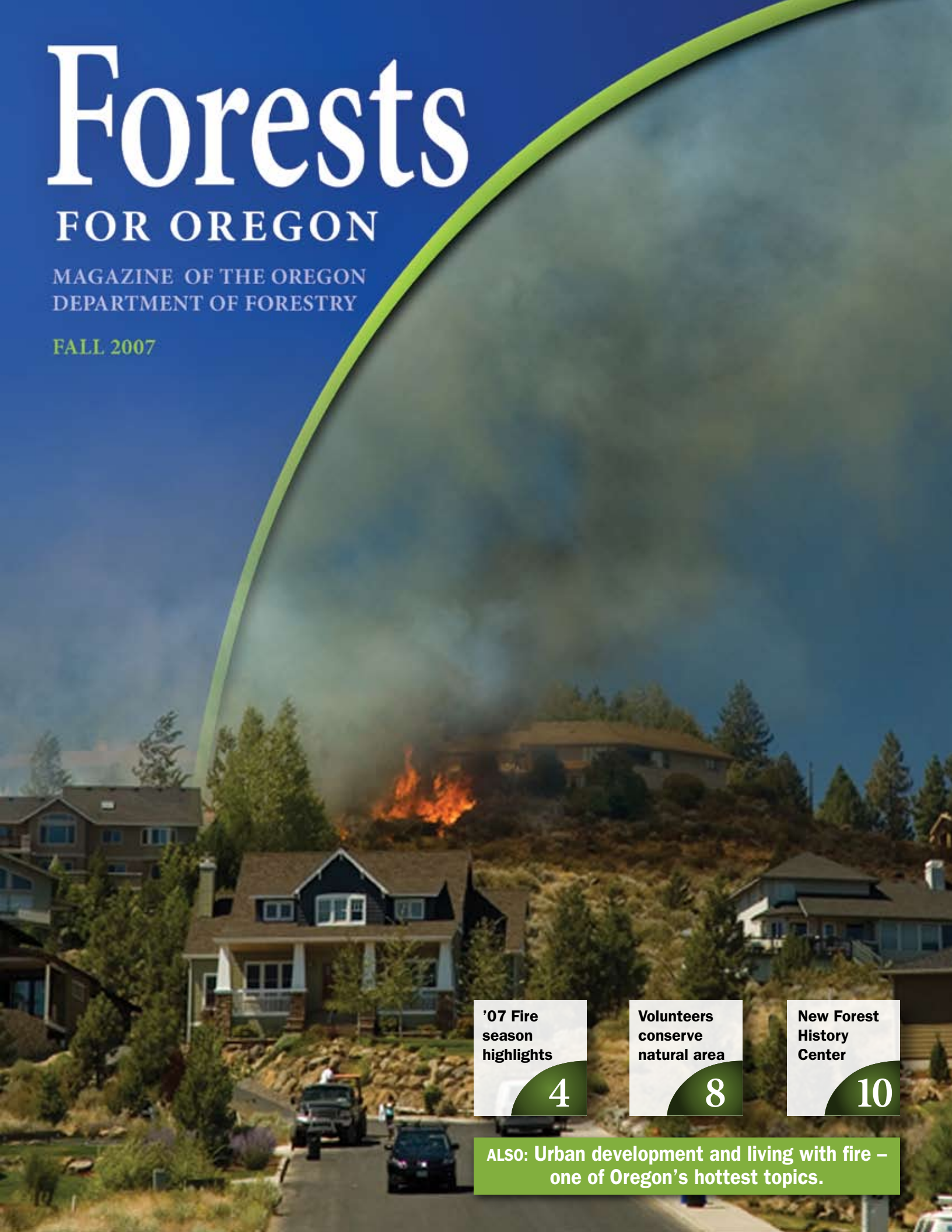


Forests

FOR OREGON

MAGAZINE OF THE OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

FALL 2007



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ALSO: Urban development and living with fire –
one of Oregon's hottest topics.



State Forester
Marvin Brown

FROM THE State Forester

Dear Readers,

As I write this it looks like the 2007 fire season is finally over. As you can see from the story in this issue, it was a challenging summer. I was out in the field during some of the busiest times. I recall seeing this bright red ball where there should have been a blazing yellow sun because the town of John Day and many square miles around were completely smoked in.

Something I've learned on these trips - and something I hope others can better appreciate - is that the State of Oregon has an incredibly effective fire protection system. People know how to put out fire in a safe, cost-focused manner. We work across the gamut of local, state and federal agencies to leverage every available resource as efficiently as possible. And the Governor, the State Legislature and the forest landowner community have seen fit to fund fire protection at the right level under a carefully crafted arrangement of shared cost and responsibility.

Around the country and at the federal level you can find all manner of approaches to putting a fire protection program in place. At the federal level, when costs exceed those for an average year, dollars are pulled from non-fire programs....which I would call very poor contingency planning. As fuel conditions worsen on federal land, what constitutes an "average year's cost" has skyrocketed. On that trajectory it will not be many years before the US Forest Service can afford to do little besides suppressing wildfire.

In many states, landowners have little to no fire protection involvement, giving them virtually no stake in the organization that protects their property. A frequent pattern is for those organizations to go under-

funded until a really bad year hits. Then, much private property value is lost, there is a lot of hand-wringing and maybe the fire protection outfit gets some new equipment and a few added personnel.

Once, in the Southeastern US, I was riding with a private forest land manager and saw smoke off in the distance. I asked, "Isn't that about where your property is? Shouldn't we go take a look?" His answer was simply, "The State takes care of fire.... we don't worry about it."

I'm not sure the average Oregonian knows the extent to which our level of landowner involvement is both unique and critical to the success of the program. Local Landowner Boards go over every detail of the fire protection budget and understand the value of wise, ongoing investment. And then they elect to tax themselves to cover half the cost. They show up on fires with people, equipment and knowledge about the property that firefighters can put to immediate use. When firefighters make decisions on active fires they know very clearly, and often personally, who the customer is for this service we provide, instilling a strong appreciation for accountability.

And what I've observed is that firefighters themselves really thrive in this type of relationship with landowners. They take tremendous pride and ownership in both their skills as firefighters, and their ability to be effective at the lowest possible cost. I don't believe you will find any group of firefighting professionals who are better at this anywhere. Period. 🌲

Marvin Brown

Forests

FOR OREGON

Fall Issue 2007
Volume 77, Number 4

STATE FORESTER
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Forests for Oregon
(ISSN 0015-7449)
is published four times per year
(Spring, Summer, Winter, Fall).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
Forests for Oregon
Oregon Dept. of Forestry
2600 State Street
Salem, OR 97310

Periodical postage paid at
Salem, Oregon

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"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

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Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF

PHOTO, LEFT: Dragonflies ("odonates") are among the most ancient of living things. Fossil records indicate these insects were flying some 300 million years ago, predating dinosaurs by over 100 million years, and birds by some 150 million.

Unfortunately, habitat and suitable sites are disappearing faster than new ones are formed. Creating small backyard ponds is one way to create additional habitat for these fascinating creatures.

COVER PHOTO: As private forest landscapes statewide are reduced and fragmented by homes and development, wildfires in urban interface areas become more prevalent and problematic. A good example early this summer was the Awbrey Butte Fire on the outskirts of Bend – a close call for many residents. The fire was later traced to a construction crew's circular saw.

Keeping landscape trees and shrubs trimmed can prevent the loss of a home when wildfire encroaches.

'07 Fire season highlights

2007 GOES ON THE BOOKS AS A SEVERE FIRE SEASON.

Rod Nichols, ODF Agency Affairs Specialist

By the midpoint of the 2007 wildfire season, the acreage burned on the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) jurisdiction had tripled the 10-year average. While it's hard to find an upside to such an inauspicious statistic, department officials pointed to legitimate successes amid an intense summer of fire.

Citing a mid-August instance of firefighters efficiently putting out a rash of lightning-ignited fires in eastern Oregon, Assistant State Forester Paul Bell said this accomplishment "can be directly attributed to aggressive initial attack with regular district resources, supplemented by nine landowner/operator dozers" as well as ODF helicopters and air tankers.

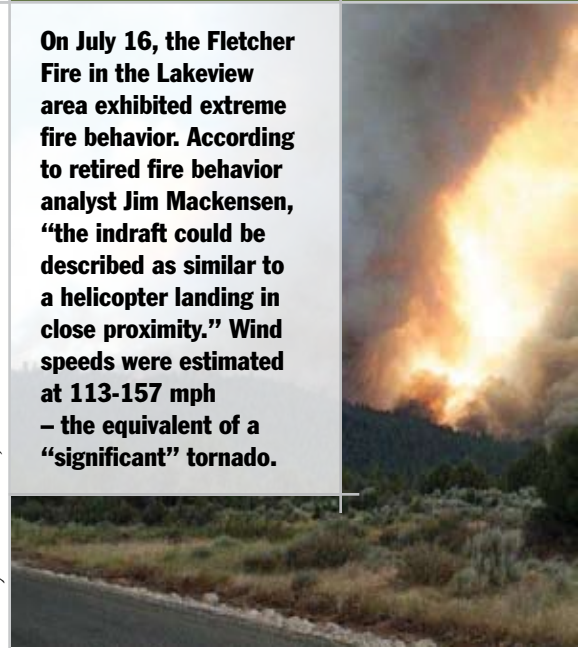
Move-ups quell lightning threat

Lightning-caused fires typically come in clusters, often overwhelming a fire agency's capability to get to all of them while still small. Bell credited the department's deployment of firefighters and equipment ahead of forecasted dry lightning storms this summer for preventing the majority of fire starts from growing large. The seven "move-ups" of resources from around the state in July and August were prompted by alerts from the National Weather Service and the department's meteorology unit, which monitors developing weather patterns that could trigger wildfires.

Thunderstorms are relatively easy to forecast. The difficulty comes in predicting whether they will be dry or wet. The considerable expense of a move-up prompts fire managers to deliberate carefully before issuing an order. But in the case of this summer's move-up operations, new lightning starts sprang up as predicted, vindicating their decisions. Without the additional fire engines, aircraft and fire crews pre-positioned at the sites, extensive damage to forest resources and costly, protracted firefighting would almost certainly have been the outcome.

On July 16, the Fletcher Fire in the Lakeview area exhibited extreme fire behavior. According to retired fire behavior analyst Jim Mackensen, "the indraft could be described as similar to a helicopter landing in close proximity." Wind speeds were estimated at 113-157 mph – the equivalent of a "significant" tornado.

Photo by Kellie Carlsen, ODF



Photos by Don Smith, retired ODF unit forester

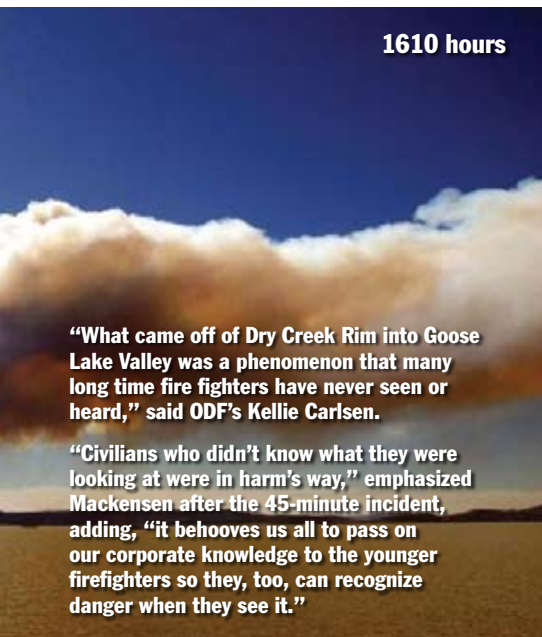




1545 hours



1604 hours



1610 hours

“What came off of Dry Creek Rim into Goose Lake Valley was a phenomenon that many long time fire fighters have never seen or heard,” said ODF’s Kellie Carlsen.

“Civilians who didn’t know what they were looking at were in harm’s way,” emphasized Mackensen after the 45-minute incident, adding, **“it behooves us all to pass on our corporate knowledge to the younger firefighters so they, too, can recognize danger when they see it.”**

Primed to burn

In both eastern and southern Oregon, the indices of fire danger exceeded historical levels for the first half of the season. By late August, two severe dry-lightning storms had already raked the forests, starting dozens of fires and straining the ability of firefighters to respond. And the parched conditions practically guaranteed that small fires, if not caught quickly, would become big ones. Fuel moisture levels were critically low in these regions of the state during this time.

A dry lightning event on Aug. 17 in the Ukiah area epitomized the weather and fuel situation that firefighters faced across the state. The department’s satellite-based lightning monitoring system detected 40 lightning strikes in that 24-hour period. Follow-up ground and aerial patrols confirmed 29 wildfires, a nearly unprecedented ratio of ignitions to strikes.

While two to three dry lightning storms per season is average, this year the fire from above persisted later into the summer than usual.

“It seems like we’re into a pattern of almost weekly lightning events,” Meteorology Manager Jim Trost said in mid-August, citing the regularity of reports of new lightning-caused fires, mostly east of the Cascade Mountains.

Air attack

The department’s aviation resources – two leased heavy air tankers and several helicopters – served as the main tool to hit these often hard-to-reach lightning starts quickly. The pilots spent little time on the ground, as they responded day after day to new reports of fire. Though tough to quantify, the number of high-potential fires stopped with the help of the tankers could conservatively be estimated in the dozens. Particularly on lightning fires in remote areas, the retardant-dropping planes did what they do best by getting to the sites fast and slowing spread until ground forces arrived to engage the fires directly.

While air tankers and helicopters are desirable to fight most wildfires, at the Cottonwood Creek Fire near the border

with Washington and Idaho they were frequently the only option. Ground-based firefighters could not safely engage a large portion of the fire due to the sheer slopes. The department’s relentless air attack succeeded in halting the fire’s advance. When lightning ignited the blaze on July 13, it marked the 18th straight day of a record-setting energy release component, a measure of how hot a fire will burn. That the closely coordinated air and ground operations were able to contain the fire at 8,100 acres under such extreme weather and fuel conditions puts Cottonwood Creek in the “win” column.

Wildfire buffs have long debated the effectiveness of air tankers vs. helicopters in fighting fire. But for ODF, they are complementary tools. While air tankers wet down unburned fuels ahead of a fire with 3,000-gallon swaths of liquid retardant, water bucket-toting helicopters make precision drops directly on the flames. The tankers’ primary role is to slow a fire’s spread to buy time for ground-based firefighting resources to get into position, while helicopters can in some situations actually put out a fire or at least block the flames from reaching valuable timber or structures. Each has a role to play in the department’s overall suppression strategy.

With weather and fuel conditions pointing to another intense fire season, the department last spring requested and received additional spending authority from the Oregon Legislature to lease two DC-7 air tankers and four helicopters. Though expensive (the contracts totaled \$3.2 million), the aircraft helped prevent large-scale damage to private and public timberlands, as well as to the many homes in and adjacent to the forest. Securing the contracts early in the year proved critical, as the onset of summer pervaded the West with wildfire and quickly made aviation resources scarce.

Contract fire crews upgraded

Regardless of technological advances, the hand crew will always be the mainstay of wildland firefighting. To ensure an adequate number of 20-person crews, the department sends out a solicitation each year to sign private crews to a

Continued on next page

Fire Season . . . Continued from page 5

contract that serves the fire agencies of Oregon and Washington. In 2007, the Fire Program upgraded the contract (formally known as the Interagency Firefighting Crew Agreement) to include a language exam. All crew leaders were required to successfully complete an approved language skills assessment taught by the Clackamas and Rogue Valley Community colleges. More than 700 crew bosses and squad leaders took the course last spring.

To improve the overall work performance of the contract crews, ODF last year rewrote the existing “low-bid” agreement as a “best-value” contract. The revised contract considered not only the hourly rate bid by a crew but also its past performance on the fire line. A follow-up survey of fire managers in ODF and sister agencies gave higher marks to the crews for technical capability, safety practices and level of training.

A look at the numbers

At the season midpoint, the number of fires reported on the 15.8 million acres of private and public lands protected by the

The lightning-caused Cottonwood Fire sparked the dispatch of ODF’s Incident Management Team 1 in mid-July.

The fire, located just six miles west of Idaho and 30 miles northeast of Wallowa, burned approximately 8,100 acres in remote, steep terrain with difficult access.

Below (left to right): a sign points the way to Cottonwood Fire’s fire camp; fire officers share information during morning briefing; the fire’s aftermath.

department was 22 percent above the 10-year average, while the total acreage burned exceeded the average by 65 percent.

While no ODF fire manager is happy with this season’s statistics, they are skewed by two large fires: the 54,000-acre Monument Complex fires (ODF’s portion of Monument was 30,000 acres; the rest was under U.S. Forest Service protection) and the 8,100-acre Cottonwood Creek Fire. Light fuels, firefighter lingo for grass and shrubs, made up a major portion of the area burned in these two incidents.

2007 will go on the books as a severe fire season on all 28.5 million acres of forestland in the state, with 444,000 acres burned to date. Oregon was not alone in suffering an onslaught of fire. It actually fared well compared to its neighbors: Idaho had reached more than 1.5 million acres burned by the end of August, and Montana some 670,000 acres.

Photo courtesy of the Mail-Tribune

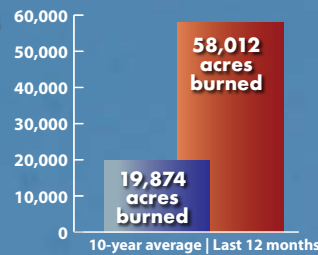
An Oregon Department of Forestry air tanker drops retardant to slow the advance of the Antioch Road Fire in southwestern Oregon.

Oregon Fire Statistics

	2007	10-YEAR AVERAGE
Lightning-Caused	293	251
Human-Caused	665	520
Total Fires	958	771

Number of Acres Burned by Fire in Oregon:

The last 12 months vs. 10-year average



Photos by Michael Branch, ODF





Above: A helicopter reloads at “Frog Pond” for another water drop during the Cottonwood Fire in July.

Below: A smoke plume from the GW Fire that burned more than 7,000 acres in the Mt. Washington Wilderness area on both federal and private lands. ODF assisted with suppression efforts on the fire, which threatened the Black Butte Ranch area in early September.



Photo by Frank Evans, ODF

Non-profit Portland group truly loves trees, natural areas

Cynthia Orlando, ODF Agency Affairs Specialist

Know the name of the only non-profit in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area exclusively dedicated to planting and caring for city trees? (*Hint: its mission includes not only planting and caring for city trees, but restoring the natural areas found within the urban forest, as well*).

Give up? Don't feel bad. Many people have never heard of "Friends of Trees," the organization whose mission is bringing people together to plant and care for both a city's trees, *and* its natural areas.

Friends of Trees (FOT) has been doing this important work since Richard Seidman founded it in 1989. And since 1990, its Natural Area Restoration program has been focusing on restoring natural sites in urban areas that are run down, neglected or degraded by invasive species.

While the terms "Natural Area" and "urban" might not seem to go together, there are, in fact, many such places hidden within Oregon's cities.

"One of the most popular areas we've done restoration work at is the Southeast Portland Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge," says Natural Area Restoration Manager Ramona Arechiga.

From construction fill to frog habitat

It's an interesting example of the dramatic turnaround a group of committed volunteers can create in an urban area. Prior to becoming a refuge, the Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge was used for construction fill for Interstate 405; so, soils at the site were not even close to being optimal for a tree-planting project. But the hard work of some 56 volunteers, adults and kids alike, and the sheer numbers of plants – more than 1,000 wetland plant species including sedges and bulrush – paid off, big time. The native plants are flourishing, and the area's improved water quality is attracting wildlife.

Visit the Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge area today and you might even see its vernal ponds being used by red-legged frogs for breeding and habitat (it's generally believed the frogs in Mark Twain's famous "jumping frog" story were the California variety of Red-legged frog).

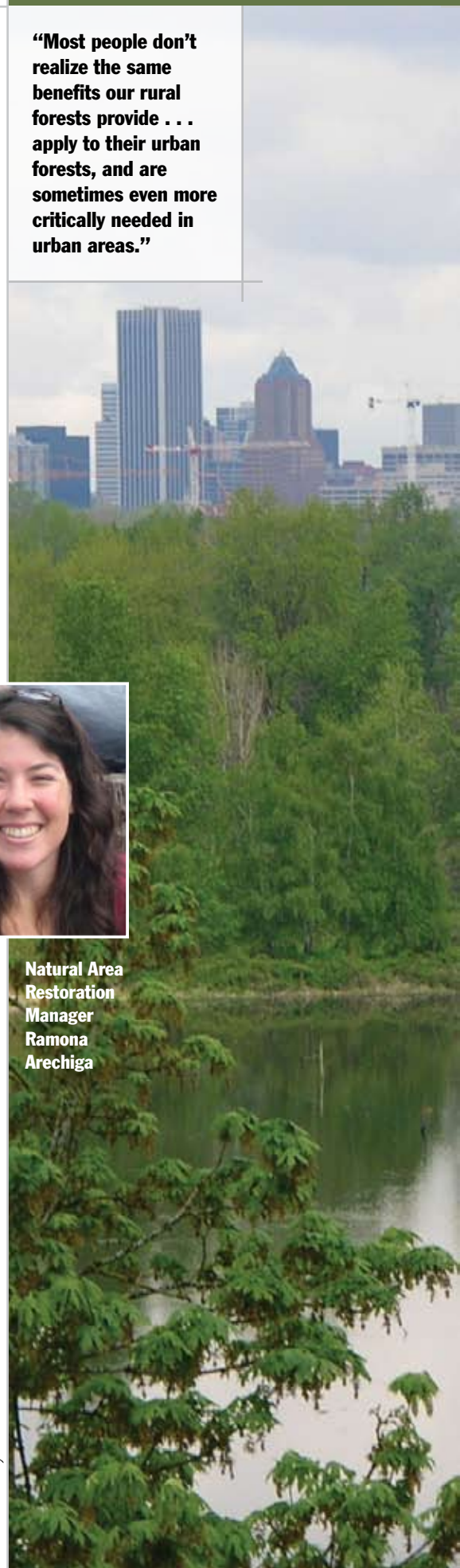
Listed as threatened, red-legged frogs occupy wetlands between sea level and 1,200 feet in elevation west of the Cascade crest through northwestern Oregon, western Washington, and southwestern British Columbia. It's believed Oregon's Willamette Valley has the most reduced and fragmented portions of its range – probably the result of competition from a variety of non-native frogs, including

"Most people don't realize the same benefits our rural forests provide . . . apply to their urban forests, and are sometimes even more critically needed in urban areas."



**Natural Area
Restoration
Manager
Ramona
Arechiga**

Photo courtesy Mark Wilson





Friends of Trees ... Continued from page 8

bullfrogs. Other concerns include climate change, and loss of habitat due to development.

Fortunately, restoring the area's ecosystem proved to be the kind of activity that attracted numerous Portland-area citizens, scouts, and volunteers who helped plant the area with wetland plant species last October.

Another recent success story was a planting project undertaken along Portland's downtown Forest Park blocks, one of the largest forested urban parks in the nation. There, the group teamed up with Portland Parks and Recreation and Friends of Forest Park, to plant western red cedar, Douglas-fir, thimbleberry, snowberry, sword fern and other shrubs. Some seventy volunteers pitched in, making the effort a huge community success.

Training makes a difference

Crew leaders are a vital component of Friends of Trees' track record – and, one of the keys to their success has been their approach to training. However, although many of their volunteers understand the importance of planting trees, Arechiga says frequently volunteers lack the “overarching paradigm” of the entire system.

What does she mean by ‘paradigm’? “Well, most people don't see the urban forest as serving the same functions as their rural forests,” says Arechiga. “They don't realize the same benefits our rural forests provide – clean air, cleaner water, recreation and habitat – apply to their urban forests, and are sometimes even more critically needed in urban areas.”

That's where good training becomes key.

Each Fall, Friends of Trees hosts training seminars that provide crew leader instruction and guidance to both new and returning volunteers. Attendees are reminded that everyone's a part of the ecosystem, for example, each volunteer receives a name badge representing one component of an ecosystem. “These training experiences result in long-time stewards, creating

volunteers that fall in love with the site and come back with or without a scheduled event,” says Arechiga, “and sometimes, bring their kids back with them.” Volunteer help is “critical to keeping the site moving towards a recovered native plant community,” adds Arechiga.


“These folks are dedicated to our mission, and come back year after year to help us implement it,” says Arechiga. Crew leaders are taught about planting methodologies, including how to lead a group of planting volunteers and “how to motivate in cold and often wet conditions,” says Arechiga, who says volunteers are educated throughout the event. “We try to take a holistic approach in taking good care of our volunteers,” she adds.

Friends of Trees' crew leaders help volunteers “connect the dots.” For example, attendees learn how the trees in front of their homes are part of the entire urban forest, and learn that while it may not look like a traditional forest, an urban forest functions in much the same way, providing many of the same benefits: clean water, clean air, oxygen, and shade for our homes and streets.

In 2006, the city of Portland and Friends of Trees received a national award at the U.S. Conference of Mayors for its accomplishments. And why not? The many trees they've planted not only clean air and water, but also slow traffic...inspire walking and bicycling... and decrease violence.

And, trees planted locally impact climate change globally. “The ripple effects of our plantings are felt throughout the Portland metro area and beyond,” adds Arechiga.

Want to help?

Friends of Trees is currently looking for more crew leaders and will be offering crew leader-training sessions in November. To get more information or sign up, please contact Ramona Arechiga at 503.282.8846 ext. 15, or visit Friends of Trees on the web at www.friendsoftrees.org 



Restoration work in the Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge near Portland created new habitat for the Northern Red-legged frog, *Rana aurora* (aurora). Competition from non-native frogs, combined with the effects of development and climate change, have reduced suitable habitat in Oregon.

Frog photo ©Gary Nafis

Oregon's New Forest History Center

Jeri Chase, ODF Agency Affairs Specialist

There's something new on the Oregon Department of Forestry's Salem campus these days – the recently opened “Forest History Center.”

Opening displays at the center include histories of reforestation and fire look-outs, and befitting the history of the building, a look back in time at the Civilian Conservation Corps and other New Deal programs and the critical work they did throughout Oregon's forests.



Photo by Alan Maul, ODF

The new Forest History Center above, houses displays, artifacts and information relating to forestry in Oregon.





The center provides a place and an opportunity for the public to view and learn about the history of forestry in Oregon. It also provides a central location for the storage and preservation of historical items, a place to conduct forest history research, and, a place to produce and publish historical information relating to forestry in Oregon.

The center is housed in a building that is itself rich in forest history. Constructed in 1936 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the building was used for the next several years as the headquarters for CCC camps that were administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry.

After the CCC was disbanded, the non-profit, statewide fire prevention agency known as "Keep Oregon Green" moved into the building, making it their headquarters for the next 55 years. During this time, the building was also home to various Oregon Department of Forestry programs.

In 2001 as part of the overall Salem Campus reconstruction, the building was moved from its original location on the east side of Mill Creek to its present home, adjacent to the State Forester's Office Building. Significant construction and remodeling was then done to restore some of the building's original features, as well as to ensure safety and accessibility for the public and improve the operating capability of the building.

While a few of the displays in the center will be permanent, most of the displays will rotate every four to six months, allowing center visitors to see new things each time they visit.

Opening displays at the center include histories of reforestation and fire lookouts, information about large fires in our state over time, and – befitting the history of the building – a look back in time at the Civilian Conservation Corps and other New Deal programs, and the critical work they did throughout Oregon's forests.

The center, which will be primarily staffed by volunteers and retirees of the Oregon Department of Forestry, is open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and at other times by appointment.

For more information on the center, or to arrange a special visit, please contact the center's coordinator, Alan Maul, at 503-945-7208 or fhcinfo@odf.state.or.us.

More information on the center, including the current exhibits, may also be found on the center's web page at www.foresthistorycenter.oregon.gov/

Mission of the Oregon Forest History Center

To preserve and make available to the public the history of forestry in Oregon, and to provide a place and opportunity to research and publish information related to Oregon's forest history.

Civilian Conservation Corps Memorial Statue

One of the most prominent features at the new Forest History Center is the statue displayed out front – that of a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) worker of the mid '30s/early 40s. CCC alumni are working hard to place statues in every state in the nation; at this time, 41 statues have been placed around the country.

The location for Oregon's statue was chosen because of its close connection to the CCC. The base the statue stands upon is stone salvaged during the recent reconstruction of ODF's Salem campus. It was used during the original 1938-39 campus construction.

Forestry highlights from the 2007 Oregon Legislature

“SEVERITY” FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDS, THE FOREST RESOURCE TRUST AND A CLIMATE CHANGE BILL ARE AMONG THE YEAR’S HOT TOPICS.

Dan Postrel, ODF Agency Affairs Director

The 2007 Oregon Legislature adjourned on June 28, after restoring some Oregon Department of Forestry budget reductions from previous years, and passing bills that addressed forestry related topics ranging from landowner incentive programs to climate change to land use.



During the session, the Department worked to advance an agenda of eight bills, all linked to the Board of Forestry's work plans and overarching *Forestry Program for Oregon*. Seven of these were approved. Department staff also worked in support of bills introduced by others in support of Board and agency objectives.

Some highlights:

THE BUDGET

The Legislature adopted a 2007-09 budget of \$271.8 million, a 15 percent increase from the 2005-07 legislatively adopted budget.

In the Fire Program, the budget restores previous reductions, includes funds to help keep pace with rising spending levels, and adds resources to improve the Smoke Management Program, as a citizen committee recommended after a two-year review.

Budget actions in the Private Forests Program include partial restoration of field and monitoring resources reduced in past years, addition of two positions to monitor the effectiveness of water protection rules in Eastern Oregon, and some resources to focus on biomass use.

In State Forests, the budget converted 11 limited-duration positions to permanent positions, involved with reforestation, timber sales, recreation and other activities.

The budget also provided dollars to improve old, overworked business systems, to replace the aging Sisters and John Day offices, and to keep current information technology systems up and running.

The new budget does not provide funds to replace dwindling federal dollars in the Urban and Community Forestry program, resulting in reductions there.

OTHER ACTION

The Legislature agreed to place before voters, in a November 2007 election, Measure 49, which modifies and limits the provisions of Measure 39, which voters approved in 2004.

In some cases, bills that did not pass were as significant as many that did. For instance, the Legislature considered but did not approve a variety of increased requirements on pesticide use, including increased reporting or notification requirements and buffers around schools.

The Department will join other state agencies in addressing monitoring and other pesticide-related issues before the 2009 regular session.

The Legislature did take a step toward a new way of doing business, making plans to return to Salem for a February 2008 session, a possible move toward regular yearly sessions.

Here are some other highlights from the session:

The Department's legislative agenda

(Note: these are bills developed by Department staff and introduced by the Governor on the Department's behalf)

HB 2067 – Maintains the current system for **sharing emergency fire suppression and insurance costs** on state-protected land among landowners and the state's general fund. Landowners are responsible for the first \$15 million each year, with the state responsible for an additional \$10 million as necessary. Insurance, purchased jointly by the state and landowners, covers costs above \$25 million.

Under the system, the state also provides "severity" funds, allowing for the pre-positioning of helicopters, firefighting crews and other resources in times and places of expected severe fire danger.

HB 2068 – Adds the State Forester or designee to the state **Invasive Species Council**, whose members include representatives from the Departments of Agriculture and Fish & Wildlife, and from academia. Council activities include providing outreach and coordination regarding invasive plant and animal species and their possible impacts.

HB 2069 – Clarifies laws under which the Department operates the **Schroeder Seed Orchard** near St. Paul and the associated **Forest Tree Seed Bank**. The bill ensures the Department's ability to continue to work with public and private partners to develop high-quality seed and to make it available to family forestland and other forest landowners.

HB 2114 – Makes improvements intended to encourage participation in the under-used **stewardship agreement program**, in which landowners agree to exceed current rules in order to improve or conserve fish and wildlife habitat or water quality. The bill allocates no money, but sets up means for financial assistance for landowner projects if funds should become available in the future.

The bill also allows the Department or Board of Forestry to exempt participants from future changes to specific forest practice rules, and limits public disclosure of the management plans that are required as part of stewardship agreements. These plans may contain information that landowners deem proprietary or commercially sensitive.

HB 2115 – Sets **Forest Products Harvest Tax rates** for calendar years 2008 and 2009, for the Department's administration of the Forest Practices Act, and for the Oregon State University Forest Research Lab.

HB 2293 – Makes improvements intended to increase participation in the under-used **Forest Resource Trust**

Continued on page 18

Backyard Burning:

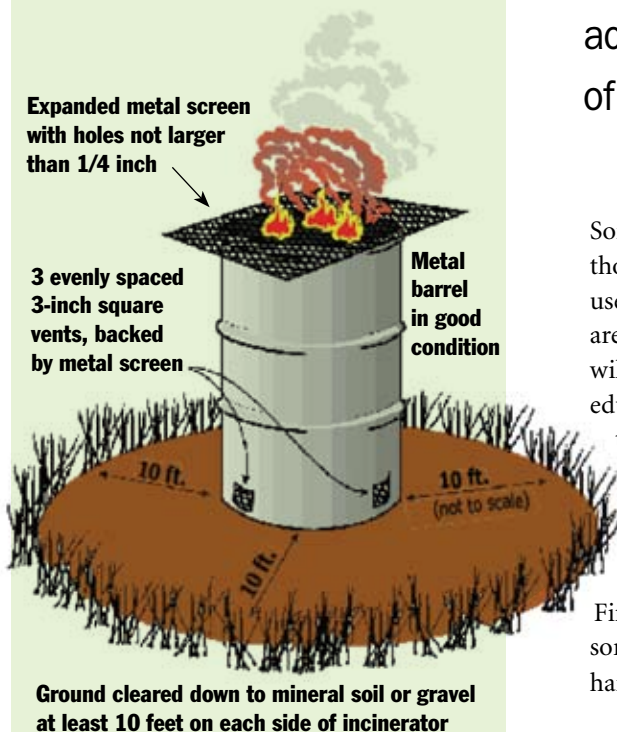
Many Oregonians burn yard waste and other debris. Unfortunately, some don't follow safe burning procedures.

Common mistakes include:

- burning in poor weather conditions
- forgetting to clear around the pile or burn barrel that keeps the fire contained
- failing to put out the fire completely after burning

In 2007, 26 percent of the total human-caused fires were attributed to careless burning of debris.

Most Oregon Department of Forestry districts allow burning without a permit until fire season begins. At that point, when going into regulated use, several of the districts ban burning, while others allow burning to continue with a permit. Check with the local department office for the current rules before burning debris.



Careless people still tax firefighting resources

Mary Ellen Holly, President,
Keep Oregon Green Association

As large, lightning-triggered wildfires led off newscasts this summer, fire prevention experts monitored a disturbing though less publicized trend: an increase in fires caused by people.

Mary Ellen Holly, president of the Keep Oregon Green Association, notes some surprising factors found in recent fire statistics for the 15.8 million acres protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry.

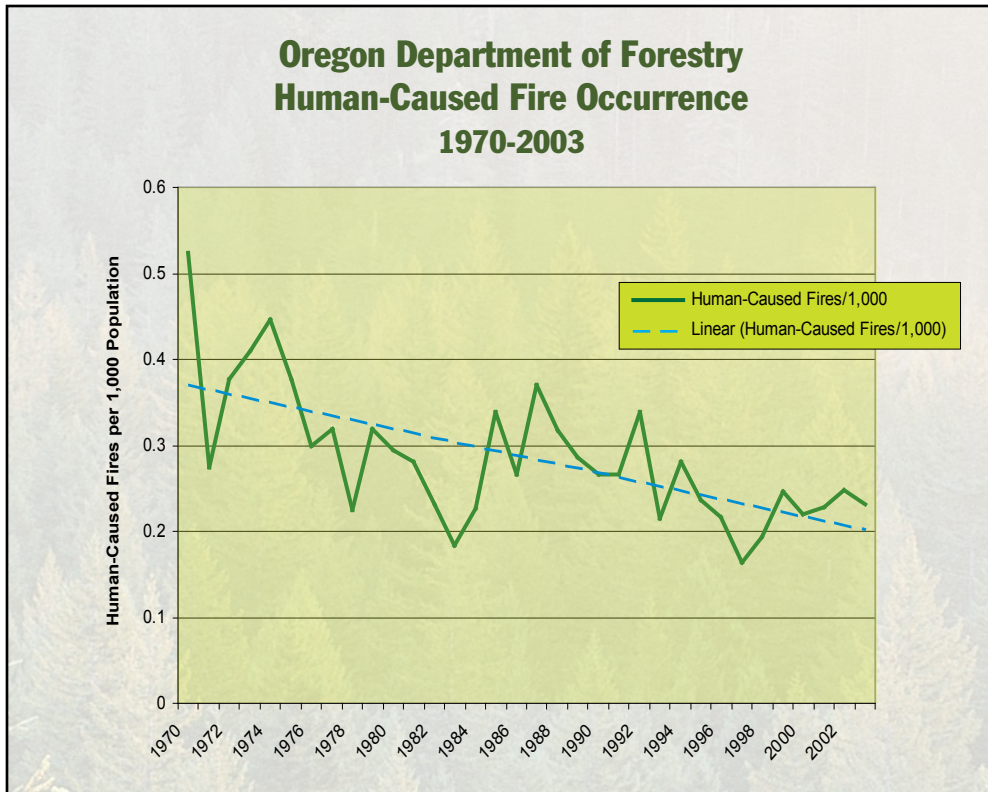
Some safety practices, such as thoroughly drenching a campfire after use, may seem intuitive, while others are less obvious. The department's wildfire database aids in targeting educational outreach to fire causes that emerge as significant problems. "Equipment Fires" is a broad category, tying for the second highest cause with another broad category, "Miscellaneous Fires." I like to think of equipment as something I use personally with my hands, but this category includes:

- burning vehicles
- exhaust or sparks from a vehicle
- power lines
- forest operations

The "Equipment Fires" category accounts for 13 percent of the total number of wildfires started by these activities.

On the other hand, the "miscellaneous fires" include:

- burning buildings
- fireworks
- dumping of hot ashes
- the catchall, "other."



**Hotter, drier weather
is coming earlier in
the year . . .**

**Keep Oregon Green
will continue to raise
public awareness of
wildfire problems and
prevention measures.**

Vying for second place, this category chalked up 12 percent of the total human-caused wildfires to date.

Tom Fields, public information officer for the Douglas and Coos Forest Protective associations, called me a couple of weeks ago and said that there were problems in one area of their district where campers were completely ignoring fire-restriction signs. These are the folks who keep firefighting resources tied up and unavailable when the “Big One” hits. As of this writing, 35 wildfires have been caused by campers who abandoned their camp or warming fires.

While smoking fires have decreased significantly, smoking remains the fifth-highest cause of wildfires in Oregon.

So what’s causing these overall increases? From 1990 to 2001, Oregon’s annual population growth rate was 1.8 percent, for a total of 611,000 new residents. This rate was double the national average. Between 2000 and 2009, the state’s population is forecast to increase by an additional 362,000 people. Fortunately, as this chart shows, the number of wildfires per 1,000 people has not grown at the same pace as the population.

There are more and more people moving into the wildland-urban interface. Most of the population increase is due to immigration from other states. Many of these individuals may not be aware of Oregon’s wildfire problems or the need to take prevention measures. Coupled with the potential for language barriers among this new group, the challenge to educate these new residents is great.

There is also a much greater demand today for forest recreation. A new sport, geocaching, is just one type of

activity that the forests are hosting. Camping is still my favorite, and, yes, I have a campfire (when they’re allowed, of course!).

I used my last trip to teach my grandsons, who are seven and five, why it’s important to drown that fire, stir the coals and drown it again. I think our ashes from the day’s fire were about 12 inches deep, and it took three buckets of water to make sure all were completely cold before we left.

What was hard about that? Nothing. But it was a great lesson for the kids. More parents need to understand the risks and exercise common sense when they’re using Oregon’s resources for their playgrounds.

Another reason we may be having more and more small fires - such as escaped debris burns and campfires - is that hotter, drier weather is coming earlier in the year, increasing the risk that fires will start and move through the lighter fuels such as grasses and brush, at a faster rate. Not that I’m trying to take the responsibility away from the careless behaviors, but those behaviors result in wildfires more often due to the dryness.

The Keep Oregon Green Association will continue to raise public awareness of wildfire problems and educate people about prevention measures to help “keep Oregon green” and keep our firefighters safe.

Have you visited our website yet? Go to www.keeporegongreen.org and check out our Keep Oregon Green Ranger Program for your kids or grandkids.

Maybe the kids can teach the parents some common sense! Keep Oregon Green - for you and your future. 🌲

Western Larch (*Larix occidentalis*)

Jeri Chase, ODF Public Affairs Specialist

Autumn has come again. And while the western United States may not have the same reputation for fall foliage as the eastern states, fall color still seems to be everywhere we look.

The vast coniferous forests of the Pacific Northwest are one reason most people don't think of western states in association with fall color, but those of us who live here know full well the fall beauty that deciduous trees like ash and vine maple share with us every year like clockwork.

Most astonishing? In some special forests of Oregon's northcentral and eastern mountains, one conifer is putting on a fall color display of its very own. It is the western larch, one of the only cone-bearing trees to lose its leaves every year and one of Oregon's best-kept secrets.

That's because, before the western larch loses those leaves – or needles – they turn a brilliant yellow-gold.

Larches of all kinds are often referred to as tamaracks, particularly by those from the eastern United States, where the true tamarack, another larch species, grows. Although there are 10-14 species of larch throughout the world, the western larch is one of only two larches that grow in the Pacific Northwest, and the only larch native to Oregon.

In Oregon, Western larch often grows inter-mixed with other conifers. Against the traditional dark evergreen colors of their neighbors, their golden fall color can be spotted for miles around. If other deciduous trees are growing in the same area, the western larch drop its needles and shows its shimmering color later than those other species; hence, they are still the golden stars of Oregon's forests, standing tall and shining alone.

And the show doesn't stop there. After remaining bare throughout the harsh, cold winter, the lush new growth on the western larch in early spring is a brilliant pale green – still setting them apart from afar among the deeper colors of the surrounding forests.

As summer follows spring, the needles darken to a more traditional evergreen color, but if you know what to look for, western larches can still be easily spotted among other trees in our forests. They are fast-growing and amazingly straight and tall – up to 180 feet – with a narrow, pyramidal and conical crown.

Western larches are often among the first trees to return following fire, thriving in the forest openings created after wildfire sweeps through an area.

Photos courtesy asherekinimages.com

Western Larch branch and pinecones.



The relatively short, horizontal limbs often seem exactly parallel to the ground. They are a member of the pine family, so like other pines, their lower limbs will drop as the trees continue to grow. A mature western larch will often only have limbs on the upper third or half of the tree; a tall tree may have 60-100 feet of bare trunk before branches begin.

The feathery-looking, radiating needles are narrow and flat, from one to two inches long, and grow from wood nubs, yellow-green when they first appear, darkening in color throughout the year. Western larch cones are small, oblong and woody; young cones will be a deep reddish-purple, maturing to brown, and hanging on to the tree long after they have been pollinated, dispersed their seeds, and turned to grey-black shells.

Long on beauty... and long on life

These are amazingly long-lived trees – 500 years is not unusual, and western larch trees up to 800 years have been found. The reddish-brown bark of mature trees becomes deeply furrowed and, again like other members of the pine family, may break away from the trunk in jigsaw puzzle-shaped pieces. The trunk of a mature tree may be up to four feet in diameter.

These trees prefer to grow at elevations of 2000 to 7000 feet on northern- and eastern-facing mountainsides, and in valleys, in the coolest, wettest areas of what are often the driest, hot eastside forests. While they prefer the coolest locations, they need the sun, and will not survive in the shade. Because of their strong and thick bark, mature trees can withstand fires of moderate intensity. In fact, western larches are often among the first trees to return following fire, thriving in the forest openings that can be created after wildfire sweeps through an area.


Habitat uses and history

Western larches are also valuable for wildlife. Mature larch trees provide habitat for nesting bald eagles and goshawks; western larch snags are important homes for cavity-nesters, like woodpeckers. Its seeds are prized as food by many birds, including pine siskins, redpolls, and crossbills.

The western larch was one of the 179 previously undocumented plants and trees catalogued by the Lewis and Clark expedition, and Oregon's Native Americans found many uses for these trees. It was easy to gather firewood from younger trees, and large, pitchy burls from older trees were used to make pots. The gummy resin

produced under the tree's bark was used to heal cuts and bruises, chewed to ease sore throats, and brewed into tea, to relieve coughs and colds.

Because of its strength, decay-resistance, and the beauty of its fine-grained wood, western larch is an important tree for wood products. Its wood is sought after for poles, flooring, cabinets, and interior and exterior trim materials, and it also makes excellent firewood because of the high heat it produces as it burns.

From its brilliant new green of spring and deep emerald of summer, to its vivid golden color in autumn, the unique and magnificent western larch is yet another example of the beauty of Oregon's native forests. 

Forest Health Note: What's damaging Western Larch in Oregon?

A recent publication of the Oregon Department of Forestry highlights the major insects and diseases that can damage western larch trees in Oregon. You can download a copy of this Forest Health Note at www.oregon.gov/ODF/PRIVATE_FORESTS/docs/fh/larchcasebearer.pdf

Warning . . . that tree is not dead!

Because the western larch changes color and loses its leaves, it breaks all of the rules that we learned in school about evergreen and deciduous trees. As a result (and because this tree makes for such excellent firewood), many times when people see these trees turn color and lose their needles, they falsely assume the tree is dying and want to cut these great beauties down in the late fall or winter.

This short story illustrates the problem: many years ago when Oregon ran a contest for a design to be featured on its new license plates, the artist who won created a plate with a western larch in deep golden fall color as the center of its design. Due to many complaints about having a "dead" tree on Oregon license plates, a short time later the color of the tree was changed to green – another indication that the unique qualities of the western larch are not widely known.

So, just remember: for much of the year, a western larch may *look* different from its other cone-bearing cousins, but it's actually alive and well, and will again display its needles come spring and summer.



program, which seeks to encourage landowners to improve forest management and to plant forests on under-producing lands.

The bill allocates no funds, but makes the program easier to use, and improves lending provisions and other financial aspects should money become available in the future. It also directs the Department to help forestland owners find ways to receive compensation for the environmental benefits of their forest management activities, such as carbon storage. Rulemaking will be required to implement the changes to the program.

SB 99 – Makes refinements to the **Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act of 1997**, which seeks to increase fire safety in interface areas. Changes include provisions addressing properties with multiple owners, and allowing the State Forester to enter into agreements to resolve conflicts between local fire-protection requirements and those of the Act. An amendment added a question to sellers' disclosure statements about whether a property has been classified as being within the forestland-urban interface.

NOTE: The Department-sponsored bill that did not pass, Senate Bill 98, would have provided a means for state acquisition, from willing sellers, of working forests facing conversion to other uses. Proceeds from management of these forests would go to benefit higher education.

Additional key bills

HB 2210 – Part of Governor Kulongoski's **renewable energy** package, the bill provides incentives for greater development and use of agricultural and forest material for biofuel. These include a **new tax credit for producers and collectors of biofuel raw materials**.

HB 2468 – Eliminates a requirement, approved during the 2005 session, that the federal **Forest Legacy Program** be used only within urban growth boundaries. The program provides funding and other support for state and

local efforts to protect forestlands that are at risk of conversion to non-forest use.

HB 2973 – In response to recommendations of a review committee, makes operational changes in the Department's **smoke management program**, including updating terminology, and requiring data-collection to compare wildfire emissions with those of prescribed burning.

HB 3043 – In cases of failure to meet post-harvest reforestation requirements, allows the Department to issue **civil penalties equal to the estimated cost of the reforestation**. The bill is intended to increase landowner incentive when needed to achieve compliance with the Forest Practices Act's reforestation rules.

HB 3364 – Allows taxpayers to include the Department's application fee in calculating costs eligible for the state's **reforestation tax credit program**.

SB 450 – Enhances the Department's ability to assist in the **formation of rangeland fire protection associations**, providing fire protection to areas that would otherwise have none, through training, assistance with purchase of liability insurance and other measures. The bill appropriates \$30,000 in general funds and allows spending of an additional \$30,000 in other funds.

SB 994 – Requires that **counties that have deeded forestland to the state must provide advance, written consent before revenues produced from managing those state forests can be transferred in the future for uses other than managing the forests**. This is part of an agreement to transfer \$3.65 million of those revenues during 2007-2009 to be available for administrative expenses related to the Fire Program. This issue arose during discussion of whether landowners are paying sufficiently for administrative expenses.

Selected other bills with forestry links

HB 2100 – Clarifies that **use of water for non-emergency firefighting training**

is exempt from requirements for water rights application, permit or certificate.

HB 3244 – Establishes in statute a **Sustainability Board**, consisting of the Governor and 10 others the Governor appoints, subject to Senate confirmation. Duties include recommending legislation, policy changes or other actions that support sustainability.

HB 3543 – Addresses **climate change** through several measures, including setting greenhouse gas reduction goals, establishing a **Global Warming Commission** that includes the State Forester, and creating an **Oregon Climate Change Research Institute**. The bill also acknowledges forests' significant role in carbon storage and climate change's possible effects on forests.

HB 3546 – Extends for about one year the **review period for Measure 37 claims** submitted after November 1, 2006.

SB 420 – Creates an **Environmental Justice Task Force**, appointed by the Governor. Duties include advising the Governor and state natural resources agencies on environmental justice issues, and identifying, in cooperation with agencies, low-income and minority communities that may be affected by agency decisions. The bill directs agencies to create a citizen advocate position; duties include advising the agency of the effects of its decisions on groups traditionally under-represented in public processes.

SB 514 – Establishes a **property tax special assessment program for land subject to conservation easements**. Allows land currently subject to farm or forest special assessment to be transferred to new program without payment of additional tax.

SB 1011 – Authorizes counties and metropolitan service districts to create a process for **designating rural reserves** on land not included in urban growth boundaries or rural communities. The bill also modifies the process for designating urban reserves in the Metro area, in and around Portland. 🌲

Free publications outline careers, employment in forest sector

Three new Oregon Forest Resources Institute publications aimed at students and others exploring forest sector career options highlight the opportunities for excellent jobs in these fields.

Oregon's Forestry Professionals: Evolution and Growth of the Forestry Profession in Oregon

This publication describes the roots of American forestry and the field's expansion and visions of the future. Working professionals are profiled in today's range of disciplines.

Oregon's Skilled Forest Products

Workforce: A National Leader in Wood Products Manufacturing

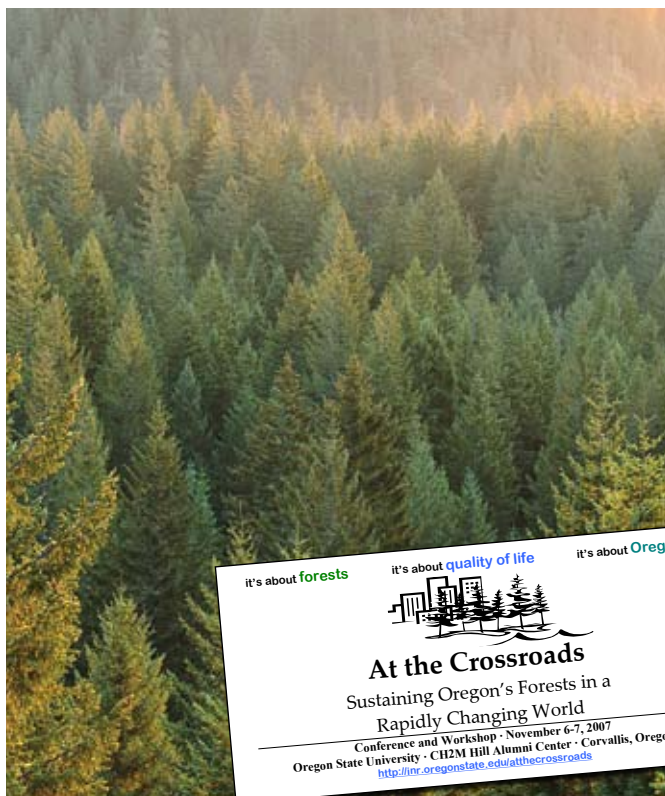
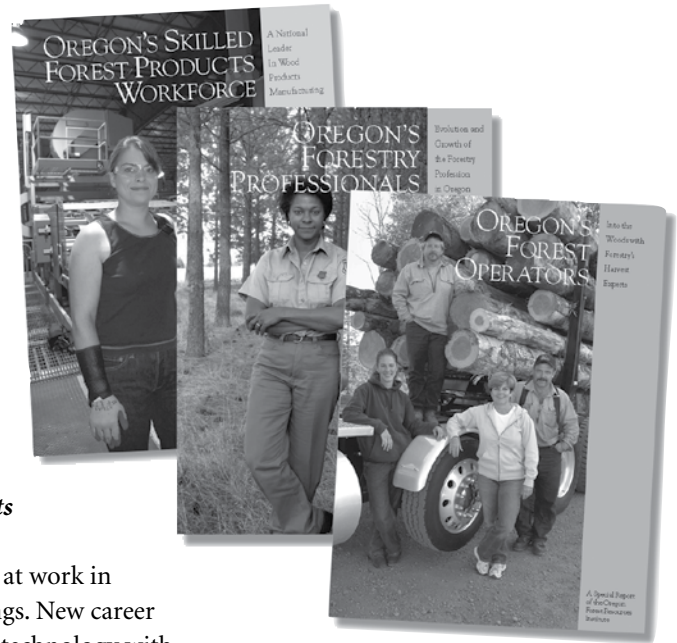
This report looks closely at work in modern forest mill settings. New career paths involve innovative technology with jobs incorporating seemingly unrelated skills in fields such as metallurgy and electronics.

Oregon's Forest Operators: Into the Woods with Forestry's Harvest Experts

This publication follows classroom and on-the-job training routes to opportunities in sophisticated forest-

harvest operations. While forest work remains strenuous, today, strength is less important than mathematical, mechanical and other technical skills.

For copies of these and other interesting forestry publications, please call (971) 673-2949 or visit www.oregonforests.org



The future of Oregon's forests is topic of "At the Crossroads" conference and workshop

Several recent conferences and workshops have addressed various facets related to the future of Oregon's forests. A November conference, "At the Crossroads," will attempt to integrate and build on them.

"At the Crossroads" aims to promote greater awareness of the multiple benefits Oregon's forests produce

– from timber products and recreation to ecosystem services such as clean air and water. The November 6-7 conference is also a venue to seek and incubate common ground for maintaining the benefits of Oregon's forests in the face of unprecedented threats. For more information visit <http://inr.oregonstate.edu/atthecrossroads/> or call (541) 737-1976.

coming up



NOVEMBER 1

Board of Forestry Field Tour

Sun Pass State Forest

For more info: 503-945-7210

NOVEMBER 2 • 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Board of Forestry meeting

Mahogany Room, Running Y Ranch, Klamath Falls

For more info: 503-945-7210

NOVEMBER 6-7, 2007 • 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

At the Crossroads conference

OSU Hill Alumni Center

For more info: 541-737-1976

NOVEMBER 10, 2007 • 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Natural Area Restoration Crew Leader Training

Magness Memorial Tree Farm

For more info: Ramona Arechiga,

503-282-8846 ext. 15

NOVEMBER 17, 2007 • 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Neighborhood Trees Crew Leader Training

Sellwood

For more info: 503-282-8846 ext. 12

NOVEMBER 17-25, 2007

Hugh Hayes Artwork on display and sale

Tillamook Forest Center

For more info: 503-815-6800

NOVEMBER 24 & 25, 2007 • 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Holiday Wreath Making

Tillamook Forest Center

For more info: 503-815-6800

NOVEMBER 27, 2007

Plants, Soil Quality in post-construction sites

OSU Research Center, Aurora

Many other seminars. For more info: 503-874-8263

Forests for Oregon

Oregon Dept. of Forestry
2600 State Street
Salem, OR 97310



"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"