

Eastern Lane Unit History

The Eastern Lane Unit of the South Cascade District has its roots in the earliest fire protection organization in Oregon history.

Organized fire protection in Oregon began in the early 1900's. In 1902, devastating fires in western Oregon burned over 700,000 acres. These fires were largely the result of land clearing and other "settler"-related activities in combination with severe fire weather. In 1904, Booth-Kelly Lumber Company started the first cooperative fire patrol in Oregon in Eastern Lane County. Other industry landowners with intermingled lands also participated.

In 1911, the first Oregon forest fire laws were enacted, the State Board of Forestry was appointed, and the first State Forester was appointed. Fire Wardens were hired under direction of the State Forester, and this was the beginning of the Oregon Department of Forestry.

In 1913, Eastern Lane Fire Patrol Association was formed out of the Booth Kelly fire protection cooperative. Also in 1913, in the upper reaches of the McKenzie River, the Blue River Fire Patrol Association was formed. The Eastern Lane Fire Patrol Association took over all fire protection responsibilities on 230,000 acres of forest land in 1926.

In 1975, the Association contracted with Oregon Department of Forestry to take on fire protection responsibilities, and the Eastern Lane State District was inaugurated. Today, Eastern Lane Unit, part of the larger South Cascade District, represents a true partnership between private landowners and the government in providing fire protection to more than 670,000 acres of forest land. In 2004, the ELFPA celebrated 100 years of organized fire protection!