

Agenda Item No.:	3
Work Plan:	Forest Resources Division
Topic:	Ceremonial Events and Recognitions
Presentation Title:	2023 Forest Practices Operator of the Year Awards
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SUMMARY

The Board of Forestry recognizes Operators of the Year. This year's award recipients are Leigh Ann Vradenburg, Plikat Logging, Inc. and Ron Staley Enterprises, Inc.

BACKGROUND

The Oregon Forest Practices Act aims to provide for the overall maintenance of air quality, water resources, soil productivity, and fish and wildlife. These forest resources are important to all Oregonians. The Operator of the Year program recognizes operators who voluntarily protect these resources in a conscientious and diligent way. To recognize operators who meet or exceed Forest Practice Act requirements, typically the Board names one Operator of the Year per Region and one or more Merit Award recipients; ODF districts may also issue Letters of Commendation. Program goals are to:

1. Recognize operators who consistently meet or exceed the Oregon Forest Practices Act and voluntarily raise industry standards; and,
2. Improve public understanding of the Forest Practices Act, its administration, and its effectiveness in protecting natural resources.

PROCESS

Anyone may nominate candidates for the Operator of the Year. Agency staff screen the nominees for minimum requirements. The Regional Forest Practices Committees review the nominations for their region. Each committee chooses a recipient based on innovative techniques, cooperative spirit, consistent performance, and measures taken to protect forest resources. To make the selection, Regional Forest Practices Committee members tour the sites, review nominations, and watch videos that capture the operator's work.

The 2023 Operators of the Year are:

For the Eastern Oregon Region –

Leigh Ann Vradenburg of Klamath Falls, Oregon earned the award for her efforts collaborating with members of the Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership, landowners, operators, and cooperators to accomplish multiple forest health projects. Leigh Ann has demonstrated the willingness time and time again to take the lead to address the various challenges associated with forest health and stewardship in the area. She exhibits tremendous effort, energy, and knowledge to the work that she does improving Oregon's forests. Leigh Ann continually leverages creative thinking as it relates to the necessities of the forests, the operator, and operations for many successful outcomes. Leigh Ann's success is through the relationships she has established with local contractors and operators. She has been a true steward of the forest, coordinating multiple operators and projects while working to educate non-industrial and industrial forest owners to benefit the Klamath basin forests.

Southwest Oregon Region–

Plikat Logging, Inc. of Camas Valley, Oregon earned the award for its diligent planning and harvesting practices. The company has a record of long-term conscientious logging practices that meet or exceed the Oregon Forest Practices Act (FPA). Plikat took on an operation with many protected resources in Douglas County. The operation bordered 3 fish-bearing streams, had numerous challenges including winter logging, and required multiple harvesting techniques including downhill yarding. Their thoughtful planning and innovative techniques allowed them to protect Riparian Management Areas (RMA) and successfully harvest the unit with no damage to any of the soil and water resources. Additionally, Plikat had additional challenges managing for public access to the Doerner Fir in an adjacent timber stand during their operation (one of the tallest known trees in the world which is not a redwood). Plikat maintained excellent communication and coordination with the BLM and the landowner to manage public access and safety while maintaining the roads for public use when the operation was complete.

Northwest Oregon Region –

Ron Staley Enterprises, Inc. of Sweet Home, Oregon earned the award for their efforts as a consistently conscientious logging company. Owner Ron Staley walked the unit prior to operating to review the site and plan how to protect resources involved as well as reviewing road and landing locations. The company is innovative in their utilization of new tools and technologies for harvesting. The operation had numerous protected resources including multiple segments of medium and small fish bearing streams, existing roads with fish crossings located within Riparian Management Area's (RMA) and several areas with steep, shallow soil slopes adjacent to the RMA's of streams. Staley elected to move his yarder multiple times, working from both sides of an RMA to avoid yarding logs over or through an RMA. Three road crossing culverts that were blocking fish passage were replaced with fish passable culverts opening access to additional fish stream habitat. Staley empowers his staff to make calls to shutdown hauling to prevent sediment delivery to waters of the state from wet weather conditions.

PUBLICITY

The department recognizes the operators through news releases, social media posts, and at annual statewide industry events, including the Associated Oregon Loggers Convention, the Oregon Logging Conference, and the Oregon Small Woodland Association Conference.

All nominees met or exceeded Forest Practices laws and improved Oregon's forests in multiple ways, from enhancing fish and wildlife habitat to forest management planning for private landowners to improving fire safety and forest health, and safeguarding water quality and soil.

Merit Award and Letter of Commendation recipients will be recognized at local functions. The Merit Award recipients for 2023 are:

- Rude Logging LLC of Prairie City, OR – Eastern Oregon Region Merit Award
- Weber Logging and Construction, Inc. of Roseburg, OR - SW Oregon Region Merit Award
- Don Hamann, Inc. of Butte Falls, OR - SW Oregon Region Merit Award
- Pellham Cutting, Inc. of St. Helens, OR – NW Oregon Region Merit Award
- Big O Logging Inc. of Birkenfeld, OR – NW Oregon Region Merit Award

All of the videos for the merit award winners can be found at: [Oregon Department of Forestry - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/@OregonDepartmentofForestry) (<https://www.youtube.com/@OregonDepartmentofForestry>)

Staff will give a brief presentation, including videos, and operator recognition.

- Leigh Ann Vradenburg:
[Eastern Oregon Operator of the Year for 2023, Winner - Leigh Ann Vradenburg - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNzSAI9hxHA)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNzSAI9hxHA>)
- Plikat Logging, Inc.:
[Southwest Oregon Operator of the Year for 2023, Winner - Plikat Logging, Inc. - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDTXNMX1goA)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDTXNMX1goA>)
- Ron Staley Enterprises, Inc.:
[Northwest Oregon Operator of the Year for 2023, Winner - Ron Staley Enterprises - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvQRqWA4EUM)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvQRqWA4EUM>)

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends the Board of Forestry present the recipients with plaques uniquely recognizing each operator for excellent forestry work.