

# Forests

## FOR OREGON

MAGAZINE OF THE OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

Fall 2015

“By mid-September the 2015 fire season had exceeded the 10-year average of acres burned by more than 12,000.”

Fall Issue, 2015 Volume 85, No. 4

## 2015: Another Severe Fire Season

**Rod Nichols,  
Public Affairs Specialist**

At a mid-August press conference in Oregon, U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell characterized the high wildfire activity in the West as “the new normal.” His words rang true for Oregonians, who were enduring their third severe fire season in a row.

In 2015, continuing drought dried out forest fuels to the point that nearly any fire start had potential to spread quickly. Three of the earliest fires, Sugarloaf, Cable Crossing and Stouts Creek, underscored ODF fire managers’ concerns that conditions were ripe for large incidents. On June 27, the Sugarloaf Fire broke out in central Oregon. It soon became clear that extra resources would be needed, and an ODF fire team took over management of the suppression effort June 29. The blaze burned through 4,740 acres of grass and timber and was finally contained in mid-July.

Later that month, nature and people triggered back-to-back large fires in Douglas County - the Cable Crossing Fire on July 28 and the Stouts Creek Fire July 30. Lightning ignited Cable Crossing, while mowing of grass during prohibited hours sparked Stouts Creek. Cable Crossing grew to 1,857 acres before firefighters could contain it, and Stouts Creek ran to more than 26,000 acres.

With extreme fire behavior so early in the summer, fire managers knew they were facing a long season. Then in mid-August, weather took an even worse turn: Dry lightning storms started dozens of fires. Amid the parched conditions, three of them raced across the landscape: Cornet-Windy Ridge in Baker County, and Eagle Complex, also in Baker County, near the Idaho border. The third fire, Grizzly Bear Complex, crossed into the Northeast Oregon District from Washington. By the end of the month the three incidents had consumed nearly 200,000 acres.



Photo courtesy Jeffrey Apple

▲ **The Dry Gulch Fire in ODF’s Northeast Oregon District scorched 17,000-acres in just three days.**

◀ **The Willamina Creek Fire on ODF’s West Oregon District, Dallas Unit, burned an estimated 120 acres in August.**

While this season’s numerous fires, both large and small, inflicted widespread damage to the forest resource, the Canyon Creek Complex also took a major toll on developments in and near the forest. The huge incident south of John Day destroyed 43 residences and numerous other structures as brisk winds propelled it across the Central Oregon District’s John Day Unit.

By mid-September, large fires were still breaking: the Dry Gulch Fire in Northeast Oregon District scorched 17,000 acres in just three days. By that date, the 2015 fire season had exceeded the 10-year average of acres burned by more than 12,000. 🍁



Photo: ODF Archives

# Oregon's Board of Forestry revisits streamside buffers

**Cynthia Orlando, Public Affairs Specialist**

Streamside, or riparian, buffer rules ensure Oregon's streams are cool and provide a blueprint for where to leave trees during a timber harvest. Existing since the 1980s, these rules were revised in the 1990s to further protect water quality.

In 2002 through monitoring, the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) analyzed Forest Practices Act (FPA) streamside shade buffer rules to assess alignment with the federal Clean Water Act. The research showed that following FPA rules didn't meet the protecting cold water (PCW) standard, which directs that human activity should not raise stream temperature more than ½ degree Fahrenheit where salmon, steelhead and bull trout are present.

In July, Board members discussed conceptual visions about what new streamside buffer rules should include to address complex legal, scientific, and social values. To capture the many interests expressed about this rulemaking in a meaningful way, the Board has established a subcommittee to develop one or two proposals for the full Board to consider this fall. The subcommittee agreed that temperature should be the lens through which it views the rulemaking proposal process to maintain a strong connection to the water quality standard in question.

Upcoming discussions will include monitoring any new rules and assessing the rules for how effectively they meet the PCW standard, as well as consideration of equity relief for both forestland owners with smaller parcels, and small woodland owners. 🍷



Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF

▲ Before a packed house in July, Oregon's Board of Forestry discussed conceptual visions about new streamside shade buffer rules.

**New streamside buffer rules to address complex legal, scientific and social values are currently under discussion by Oregon's Board of Forestry.**

Photo: ODF Archives

## American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)

American Beech are fairly large deciduous trees with smooth, silver-gray bark and dark green leaves. They typically reach 60-100' in height and trunks can grow up to 2 1/2 feet wide. Leaves are oval-shaped and up to five inches in length, dark on top and light green on the bottom. These trees can live well past 300 years.

The fruit, called Beechnuts, provide food for a wide variety of wildlife including squirrels, rabbits, ruffed grouse, deer and downy woodpecker, and the tree is a favorite nesting site of chickadees.

Plant as a shade tree in a well-watered large, open area in part shade / part sun with good soil drainage well-away from power lines and sidewalks. Note: European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is also a lovely tree; it's a little smaller, tolerates a wide array of soils and grows a bit faster than *Fagus grandifolia*. 🌰

► **A native to eastern North America, American Beech leaves turn yellow-brown in the fall.**

Photos by Charles A. Brun, Washington State University



## news briefs

### Two landowner workshops to focus on fish passage in Oregon

Two upcoming forest landowner workshops in Seaside and Salem will highlight best practices to restore and enhance fish habitat in forested streams. The Oregon Forests Resources Institute organized the free one-day workshops, scheduled for Oct. 27 and Oct. 29, in collaboration with various public and private partners including the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, ODF, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Associated Oregon Loggers and the Oregon Small Woodland Association.

Each workshop will provide technical assistance, tools and resources to guide landowners with fish habitat and passage projects; half the day will be spent in the classroom, and the remainder in the field.

#### North Coast Fish Passage and Habitat Workshop

The North Coast Fish Passage and Habitat Workshop is scheduled for **Oct. 27 in Seaside** at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center, 415 First Ave.

#### Willamette Valley Fish Passage and Habitat Workshop

The Willamette Valley Fish Passage and Habitat Workshop takes place **Oct. 29 in Salem** at the Chemeketa-Eola Viticulture Center, 215 Doaks Ferry Road NW.

Both workshops run 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The deadline to register is Oct. 18.

**More info:** [Oregonforests.org/news/workshops-focus-fish-passage](http://Oregonforests.org/news/workshops-focus-fish-passage)

Continued on Page 4

◀ **Two fish passage workshops for forest landowners are coming up Oct. 27 and 29. Good voluntary measures landowners can take to improve fish habitat include retaining trees along streamside areas and replacing culverts.**

#### Find us on Facebook and Twitter

 [fb.com/oregondepartmentofforestry](https://www.facebook.com/oregondepartmentofforestry)

 @CommunityTreeNe **Urban Forestry**

 @ORDeptForestry **OR Dept of Forestry**



Photo by Cynthia Orlando, ODF



## Forests for Oregon

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

Find more articles and news at:  
[oregon.gov/odf](http://oregon.gov/odf)

If you'd prefer to get *Forests for Oregon* by email, contact:  
[forestsforeregon@odf.state.or.us](mailto:forestsforeregon@odf.state.or.us)

## Upcoming events at World Forestry Center

The World Forestry Center in Portland has several forestry-related events coming up this fall and winter, among them:

### United Nations Day 2015

Explore “think global, act local” and find out how Oregon and Washington are leading the way in regional, national and international programs.

When: 7-9 pm Thursday, Oct. 22 in Cheatham Hall.  
Free (registration required).

### U.N. Climate Change Conference Report

Join Dr. Steven Running as he shares the latest about climate

negotiations and the specific role global forests have in the Earth Climate System.

When: 4-6 pm, Wednesday, Dec. 9 in Miller Hall.

*More info: [Worldforestry.org](http://Worldforestry.org) – click on “newsletter.”*



WORLD  
FORESTRY  
CENTER  
50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## From the State Forester



**Doug Decker**  
*State Forester*

**“In the wake of this record fire season, we’re asking our partners and stakeholders to join us in reviewing key questions.”**

For three years in a row now, we’ve experienced record wildfire conditions – and significant losses and costs – demanding the full and extended commitment of our agency and all of our public and private partners who contribute to wildfire protection. It’s a relief for all of us as we welcome the cooler temperatures and rain of the fall.

In the wake of this record fire season, we’re asking our partners and stakeholders to join us in reviewing key questions, such as do we have the right funding and capacity for a fourth extreme fire season and beyond? What can we improve upon to best protect our precious forest resources and communities? How can we take care of our employees to make our work more sustainable over the long term while also accomplishing non-fire-related priorities?

As we reflect on this memorable fire season with an eye to the future, I offer my sincere thanks to all who contributed, and to the communities who hosted our operations and supported our people. 🌲