Watson Creek Fire

Klamath-Lake District

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FROM THE DISTRICT FORESTER

As District Forester, I am proud to present to you the 2018 Klamath-Lake District Annual Report.

The following highlights the 2018 work from all our programs on the District. I’m proud and extremely thankful to be a part of a group of dedicated professionals that do so much for our State, District and Communities. For me, 2018 was an opportunity to see some predictions come to fruition and strengthen my belief that mitigation efforts before the fires start are vital to our future successes.

It was a just a bit over a decade ago when we had a significant pine beetle outbreak in the South-Central Oregon Area. This infestation moved through several hundred thousand acres of Lodgepole and Ponderosa Pine forests. As the needles turned red and dry on all those trees, it was dubbed locally as “The Red Zone” and those of us involved in Fire Management started planning for what felt like the inevitable; a wildfire burning through an immense amount of dead fuel that would be extremely difficult to stop. Plans were put in place, and over the next couple of years, several hundred miles of road were turned into shaded fuel breaks on federal and private properties in an attempt to compartmentalize these hazard areas. Although no major fires happened during the period of time before the needles dropped off the trees, the next hazardous time was when those trees fell over adding dead fuel to the surface.

The 2018 Watson Creek fire proved to be one that had been expected. Although the shaded fuel breaks along major roadways proved to be good anchor points for the heal and flanks of the fire, in several areas the fuel breaks did not have the width necessary to slow down the fire at the head. In the end, the Watson Creek fire burned over 56,000 acres, with 12,168 acres of that being private timberland and ranch land.

We continue to build our programs and develop our mitigation work in advance of the next fire that happens in the wrong spot at the wrong time. We’ve come a long way since doing these fuel breaks, through our partnerships with the Forest Service, NRCS, and local landowners, and we continue to get more work done than we ever have. Federal Forest Restoration, Good Neighbor Authority, Joint-Chiefs awards and other grant opportunities have allowed us to work across property lines, strengthening the size and scale of these mitigation projects. I have no doubt that one day these projects will moderate a future fire on the landscape.

Dennis Lee
Klamath-Lake District Forester
With the dry winter, the drought reestablished in much of Oregon and the 2018 fire season appeared to be shaping up as an average to above average season for the Klamath-Lake District.

The seasonal indices for the district tracked near average until early July when they jumped to above average, where they stayed through September, which represented a nearly-normal fire season for the district. Overall, the district’s fire danger was in a high adjective class for 29 days (23% of fire season, three days less than 2017) and extreme for 55 days (44% of fire season and two days more than 2017).

In 2018, the district saw an average start to fire season with the official declaration coming on June 8th, and additional public use restrictions (Regulated Use Closure) put into effect for the Klamath River Canyon. Similar public use restrictions were enacted for the remainder of the district on July 6th and remained in effect until October 2nd. The district stayed in fire season for an additional ten days until it too was terminated Oct 12th. The length of fire season was 125 days (12 days shorter than 2017), and public use restrictions were in place district-wide for 87 days (4 days shorter than 2017). Both the fire season length along with the indices were above average for the district during the heart of fire season. The season overall brought less lightning events than typically seen, which in turn brought the fire numbers below what is commonly experienced on the district. However, with the drought conditions, total acreage burned was significantly above average.

2018 Fire Season Summary

The Klamath - Lake District responded to 63 fires on ODF protected lands burning a total of 13,208 protected acres, which resulted in 75% of our ten-year average in the number of fires and 363% of our ten-year average in total acres burned. Human-caused fires accounted for 75% of the number of fires and 99.8% of the acres burned during 2018. Compared to average, the number of human-caused starts was up 12%, and lightning was down 62%.

In all, the district had sixteen lightning fires throughout the 2018 fire season, with one-quarter of those occurring prior to the declared fire season start, and the remaining scattered throughout the summer. The district saw only one main lightning event during the summer occurring on July 15th, which accounted for half of the sixteen lightning fires. This occurrence was the same event which ignited the significant firestorm in Southwest Oregon that lasted a majority of the summer.
Summary (cont.)

The most significant fire during 2018 on the Klamath-Lake District was the Watson Creek Fire which started on August 15th, north of the Gearhart Mountain Wilderness area within the Paisley Ranger District. The fire covered an area from Lee Thomas Meadows to Slide Lake and from Government Harvey Pass to the Chewaucan River. The majority of the acreage burned was on the Fremont-Winema National Forest with fuels that consisted of heavy deadfall as a result of the massive mountain pine beetle epidemic of 2007-2011. The wind-driven fire burned a large block of private industrial forestland, accounting for the majority of ODF’s protected acres. The Watson Creek fire consumed 58,753 acres, 12,953 acres of that under ODF protection, adjacent to the top of and frontage of Winter Rim. The fire was managed by an Interagency Type 2 Incident Management Team (Sheldon).

The Klamath Unit experienced six fires larger than 20 acres of protected land. These fires required action for a couple of days but did not require the mobilization of an incident management team. Due to the number of fires burning around the Klamath-Unit, there were numerous days throughout the summer that the Klamath Basin was socked in with smoke and the unit had to rely upon alternate detection methods besides lookouts.

Besides the Watson Creek incident, fire activity was fairly minimal on the Klamath-Lake District; however, district personnel significantly assisted other districts across the state with their fires. Several times throughout the summer, the Klamath-Lake District was at maximum draw-down levels helping with the large fires in SW Oregon District and Central Oregon District.

The 2018 fire season was still challenging for the district even though there were fewer fires because of drought conditions where each fire start had high potential to become a large incident. As always, the coordination efforts and preparations between the agency and industrial partners ensured that the Klamath-Lake District was able to successfully meet challenges that fire season brings.
Protection from Fire (cont.)

ODF Aircraft
Two helicopters were on contract for Klamath-Lake District during the 2018 season. The Type 2 helicopter from Aris Helicopter, N58AH, came on contract in July and ended September 28, 2018. The Type 3 helicopter from Timberland Logging, N5000G, started out the fire season and then swapped out with N249TH, mid-season and ended the contract in September.

Airtanker 06
On September 9th, 2018 Airtanker 06, Lockheed P2V Neptune, flew its final flight landing at Klamath Falls Airtanker base to join Tanker 61 Memorial, Wildfire Learning Center. This included the final approach and the aircraft shutting down its engines for the last time after nearly 65 years of service (approximately 22 as a U.S. Navy aircraft and 40 years fighting wildland fires). On October 8th a maintenance crew arrived and removed the jet engines and various parts from the aircraft. Tanker 06 sits in pit #3 awaiting the preparation of its final display site next to Tanker 61 Memorial.

Private Forest Program

Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) & North Warner – Lake Unit

The Natural Resource Conservation Services program provides financial assistance to landowners for the purpose of making conservation improvements on their land. In 2018 assistance was provided to landowners in both the Klamath & Lake unit.

2017 Funds: year 1 of 3

- First year of NRCS funding through the North Warner Joint Chiefs project
- Dollars went towards 1,487 acres of treatment
- 5 total landowners signed up to access these funds for treatments
- To date, 478.5 acres have been treated with these funds
- 32% acreage completed within the first year of implementation

2018 Funds: year 2 of 3

- Second year of NRCS funding through the North Warner Joint Chiefs project
- 6 total landowners signed up to access these funds and carry out forest health treatments on their lands
- 3 landowners had participated within the project the previous year
- 3 new landowners signed up to be a part of the project for the second year of funding
- 1307.5 acres were funded for treatment with the 2018 dollars
- 787.9 acres will be treated for forest stand improvement
- The focus will be removing and decreasing mixed conifer abundance from a forest health standpoint
- Focusing on non-commercial, unhealthy, stressed or trees with low vigor
- 519.6 acres will be focused towards juniper removal
- To date, no acres have been treated with the dollars allocated through the second funding cycle, but the field season of 2019 should see an increase in acres treated with these funds

ODF Crews:

- ODF Crews completed 38 acres of pine plantation thinning within the Crooked Mud Honey project of USFS ground, through GNA. This is also within the North Warner Forest Health project.
- ODF crews completed 97 acres of juniper lop and scatter on two private properties within the North Warner Forest Health project, utilizing North Warner S&PF funds.
Private Forest Program (cont.)

Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) Klamath

- Juniper harvesting is being conducted in the Gerber Area for upland restoration projects to increase water quantity, reduce wildfire intensity, and enhance forage for grazing.
- New fuels reduction and forestry enhancement projects will begin in the Chiloquin area with sign-ups through NRCS under a new Comprehensive Implementation Strategy for that area.

Chiloquin Western States Grant

- 44 individual site assessments were completed by an ODF Natural Resource Specialist.
- 15 landowners signed up to have their properties treated for hazardous fuel reduction.
- 23 acres of fuels reduction treatment on 7 properties were completed by ODF fuels crew.
- A slash pile burning workshop was conducted on November 9, 2018 at the Klamath Outdoor Science School facility northeast of Chiloquin. Presenters included Oregon Department of Forestry, OSU Extension, US Forest Service and Klamath Watershed Partnership. There were 18 participants, with 9 of those being landowners/contractors from the project area.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Grant

In addition to supporting the work of local watershed groups and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) provides funds through grants for a range of watershed enhancement activities, including planning, assessment, monitoring, restoration projects, and education.

The OWEB Stream Survey grant with the Klamath Watershed Partnership allowed ODF personnel to survey 503 miles of streams in 2018 and has one more field survey season to complete. Two Klamath unit Natural Resource Specialists worked on this grant in the spring of 2018 and will continue their work in 2019.
Dave Harmon Logging, Inc. received the Eastern Oregon Area Merit Award in recognition of his efforts that went above and beyond on a commercial thinning of a landowner’s 15-acre parcel.

The operation was a light thinning of commercial softwoods to reduce forest insect mortality, generate revenue for the landowner, reduce fire intensity if it were to occur, and enhance the aesthetics of the property for the landowner. Wildlife enhancement was also a key focus of the harvest with large aspen trees being crowded by conifers and very little new aspen sprouts present for forage and regeneration. Sub-merchantable material was thinned for equipment access, and all non-merchantable material was piled in landings for future disposal through pile burning.

The complexity of this operation arose when the landowner hired a consulting forester to identify resource protection and develop a harvest prescription for the 15-acre project area. The forester identified a stream diversion canal from Sand Creek, which is a large fish stream directly upstream. The diversion canal is shown as a road and is not recognized in the ODF stream layer database. The operator advised the landowner to contact ODF for assistance and protection measures were developed, but the statutory waiting period now applied. Since the previously unclassified diversion channel was deemed as fish-bearing it required a temporary crossing to access the property as a small bridge would not allow for the logging equipment to be used. Culverts were difficult to come by with short notice and culvert sizing was questionable with the cold weather that threatened to freeze and alter the two stream channel flow overnight. To purchase a culvert for a one-week operation became another cost of the project that weighed against the already low volume/value of timber being removed. Removal of the culvert would require an excavator to be brought in to minimize impacts to the stream by sediment delivery and increased the costs even more. The move-in costs, costs to purchase and install a temporary stream crossing and the logging costs to harvest a 15-acre parcel were increasing costs that threatened the project’s viability. Dave had agreed to go forward with the project, despite a few concerns and an unforeseen financial burden that he had to manage during the holiday season.

The final result was a success for all parties involved. Dave thinned the timber stand and left a high residual stocking of a multi-aged / multi-species stand with an enhanced wildlife component through selective thinning. The Sand Creek diversion canal was minimally impacted with a carefully placed culvert using native fill material and was in place for a very short time (less than two weeks). By using this haul route, temporary crossing, and implementing a more costly alternative for stream protection the overall impacts of the operation were minimized.

Dave Harmon consistently strives to provide quality logging services to his customers regardless of the size of the operation. He is one of the few local loggers who takes his mechanized harvesting operation with associated operating costs to small woodland owners to manage their small woodlands. There is often a small profit margin in doing this comprehensive landowner service, high fixed costs associated with doing so and challenges such as this example further reduce the attractiveness of jobs this size. Mr. Harmon has been logging for decades in the Klamath Basin and has maintained his business through jobs such as this. He commonly makes additional time and expends extra effort for the small landowners in Klamath and Lake Counties and serves a niche market that most choose to avoid due to complexity versus gain. All who have worked with him expect this level of service from Dave and enjoy working with him as he is thoughtful and humble in his work.

To see an interview with the Landowner, Operator & Stewardship Forester on this operation please visit the following: https://youtu.be/MkoIR17mU4A
Aspen enhancement for forage & natural regeneration was part of the harvest prescription with conifer removal in the aspen stands. Aspen are declining in this area and an important wildlife tree in this area.

This channel off of Sand Creek did not have a record in the stream layer database & is shown as a road.

Shown as a road but is a diversion stream channel

Temporary Stream Crossing

The head gate controls water diversion into several channels, but does not control fish passage.

The new culvert was placed in the diversion channel to allow for logging access.

The culvert was removed, the channel restored, and the road blocked to vehicular access.

“I love the woods. Very simply, it’s a good place.”

-Dave Harmon
The Klamath-Lake District manages 105,780 of state forest lands. The district has two state forests within its boundaries: The Gilchrist State Forest, which contains approximately 71,833 acres, and the Sun Pass State Forest which contains 21,317 acres. The Gilchrist State Forest is located approximately 90 miles north of Klamath Falls, while the Sun Pass State Forest is located 40 miles north of Klamath Falls near the southeastern corner of Crater Lake National Park. Remaining state-owned land is scattered in a number of small parcels throughout the District, with the exception of two larger blocks of land tracts – Bear Valley and Yainax Butte.

### 2018 Active Timber Sales Board of Forestry Lands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sale Name</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>MBF Volume</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shoestring</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>$313,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie Hound</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>$692,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bad Ham</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>$329,970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Todzilla</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>$1,184,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steep Puppy</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>$502,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livin' on a Prayer</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>$38,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SALES</strong></td>
<td>1,369</td>
<td>11,048</td>
<td><strong>$3,060,941</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Steep Puppy Timber Sale
State Forest lands are managed to provide healthy, productive, and sustainable forest ecosystems, that over time and across the landscape provide a full range of social, economic, and environmental benefits to the people of Oregon. These lands are managed under the direction of the Eastern Region Long-Range Forest Management Plan, while generating revenue for both Klamath County and the Common School Fund. Of the 105,573 acres managed by the district, 98,746 acres are Board of Forestry lands and the remaining 6,827 acres Common School Forest lands.

**Gilchrist State Forest**

The Gilchrist State Forest, named for the timber family that owned the property for most of the 20th century, was dedicated in June 2010. The new state forest owes its creation to creative funding partnerships between the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), U.S. Forest Service- Forest Legacy Program, Oregon Lottery and The Conservation Fund. The state purchased the initial 43,000 acres of former Gilchrist Timber Company land from Fidelity National Timber Resources, Inc. in March of 2010 with $15 million in Lottery-backed bonds.

In 2015, The Conservation Fund was instrumental in helping ODF ultimately add 29,000 acres—bringing the forest to a total of 72,000 acres. The Gilchrist State forest is being managed to provide a range of long-term benefits, including wildlife habitat, timber harvesting and public access for recreation. Approximately 3,000 acres will be mechanically thinned in the Gilchrist State Forest in order to reduce stand density to acceptable levels. Diseased and overstocked material from 5.0 inches to 12.0 inches dbh will be removed. Ponderosa pine will be the preferred species to leave, and the material removed will be sold as sawlog and pulp volume. It is expected that this project will result in a break-even cash flow.

In January The Board of Forestry approved the sale of 200 acres of the Gilchrist State Forest to the Crescent Sanitary District for $62,000. The deed was signed in July and CSD began on site work the fall of 2018.

This project was identified as a critical need for the community of Crescent by the governor’s office, and the Gilchrist State Forest Parcel was identified as the #1 location. This will allow the city of Crescent to build a sewer treatment facility, that will benefit all of the residents of the community.

| 2018 Timber Sales Sold Gilchrist |
|-----------------|---------|----------|----------|
| **Sale Name**   | **Acres** | **Appraised Volume** | **Bid Value** |
| Broken Spoke    | 840      | 5,929     | $9,308    |
| Dirty Paws      | 490      | 3,650     | $4,234    |
| Powder          | 274      | 3,290     | $32,867   |
| **TOTAL SALES** | **1,604 Acres** | **12,869** | **$46,409** |
Klamath Trails Alliance

Klamath Trail Alliance (KTA) is a non-profit group made up of mountain bikers, hikers, trail runners, Nordic skiers & snow-shoers based in Klamath Falls that is focused on developing a trail network in Klamath County. Their goal is to make Klamath an attractive trail destination, as well as benefit non-motorized recreationalists in the Klamath Basin.

The Department of Forestry granted the project a Board of Forestry parcel of land lot to access the Spence Mountain Trailhead as it is the only access from Hwy 140 W. To date two additional trails have been constructed through another BoF parcel within this system.

The KTA is only getting started with their ambitious plans for Klamath County. To keep up to date on news & events visit their website https://www.klamathtrails.org/ & FaceBook page https://www.facebook.com/KlamathTrailsAlliance/

Sun Creek

The Klamath-Lake District in partnership with Trout Unlimited, ODF&W, Crater Lake National Park, and USF&W have implemented a project to expand bull trout distribution downstream from Crater Lake National Park (Park) onto the State Forest portion of Sun Creek. This effort supports a USFW Draft Recovery Plan for Bull Trout in the Klamath Basin.

Re-establishing headwater populations and increasing downstream distributions of bull trout have been represented by USFWS and ODFW as the most important recovery actions for bull trout in the Klamath Basin. The extensive project began in 2010 and is scheduled to be completed in 2019 with the final piping for irrigation is installed.

SUN CREEK PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- 2010: Installation of temp. barriers to prevent non-native fish migration
- 2011 & 2014: Modification to barriers to combat high water levels
- 2015: Channel construction began in the summer
- 2016: Channel construction completed in the fall
- 2018: Native plants were planted along the channel

Klamath Outdoor Science School

The district staff continued support of the Klamath Outdoor Science School (KOSS) to meet the long range plan goal of forest history and present day management interpretations. The primary strategy to achieve this goal is to provide youth, teachers and parents with education about the working forest. During the year, KOSS provided forest science programs to over 397 students, teachers and chaperones at the school site in Sun Pass State Forest near Kimball State Park.
Prevention

On the Klamath-Lake District we believe the fire prevention program is just as important as a fire protection program. We strive to reach all segments of the population to prevent human caused fires by maintaining programs in our schools (Poster Contest), working with our cooperators (Operator’s Breakfast), and reaching the general public through local media and numerous events through the area to include the Children’s Fair, Klamath County Fair, and the Klamath Fire Prevention Coop Safety Fair.

Poster Contest

Fire prevention is an integral part of the District’s Fire Protection Program. Prevention efforts are emphasized and presented through education, public outreach and enforcement.

Since 1995 the district has provided a Wildland Fire Prevention Poster Contest for the 2nd & 4th grade Students of Klamath & Lake Counties. The program teaches kids about the role of a wildland firefighter, what is involved in fighting a wildfire and the importance of responsible forest stewards.
The safety and wellness committee is a representation group that supports all district staff to reach goals in safety and wellness. The foundation of the committee is to function as a consulting group to the District to help provide safety-related guidance & information. The core duties of the Safety and Wellness Committee include development of our yearly safety plan, implementing the wellness program, OSHA posting and correspondence, and identifying and addressing developing trends.

The KLD Safety & Wellness committee has teamed up with representatives from the Blue Zones project, and together we reached our goal of becoming a Blue Zones approved worksite in June 2018.

To achieve this goal we made changes to our work environment and policies, as well as encourage our employees to make positive changes that dramatically improve their health and well-being.

**Safety Committee Members**

Jon Fitch—Chair  
Dennis Lee  
Jacob Barnett  
Sarah Cantrell  
Matt Flock  
Teresa Thomas  
Nancy Sherin

Inspired by the world’s longest-lived cultures, we help you live longer, better

For more information on the Blue Zones Project please visit their website: https://www.bluezones.com/
Klamath—Lake District Personnel Changes in 2018

**Klamath Unit**

- **Cale Graves**
  Promoted from seasonal / limited duration to permanent NRS2

- **Patrick Petersen**
  Limited duration NRS1

- **Jennifer Case**
  Work out of class NRS1

**Lakeview Unit**

- **Kaylee Starman**
  Resigned dispatcher position in November 2018.

**Recognitions**

- **Pam Brown** - 25 Years
  Klamath Unit Office Specialist 2

- **Matt Flock** - 10 Years
  Klamath Unit Stewardship Forester NRS2

- **Chris Weekly** - 10 Years
  Klamath-Lake District State Forests NRS2

- **Bryson Williams** - 10 Years
  Klamath Unit Wildland Fire Supervisor

- **Cale Graves** - 5 Years
  Klamath-Lake District NRS2

- **Nancy Sherin** - 5 Years
  Klamath Unit Administrative Specialist

- **Teresa Thomas** - 5 Years
  Lake Unit Wildland Fire Dispatch Supervisor

- **Klamath-Lake District**
  2018 Food Drive Best in EOA
  549 meals per employee

During the annual February State Employees Food Drive, Klamath Unit employees were responsible for raising $4,762.15 that was delivered directly to the Klamath and Lake Counties Food Bank. This averaged 549 meals per employee. Which resulted in receiving the best in EOA award.
District Organizational Chart

KFPA Board Members

Brett Johnson – Green Diamond
President

Brandon Wood – Murphy Plywood
Vice President

James Dahm – Whiskey Creek Timber
Secretary - Treasurer

Kim Dykstra – KFPA
Secretary – Treasurer Assistant

KFPA DIRECTORS

Edward Livingston
Livingston Family Limited Partnership

Chris Johnson
Whitefish Cascade Forest Resources, LLC

Glenda Stillwell
Stillwell & Buchanan Ranches

Glen Lorenz
Bar C-I, Inc