

# Northeast Oregon District 2024 Statistical Report

LA GRANDE UNIT  
BAKER SUB UNIT  
PENDLETON UNIT  
WALLOWA UNIT



Cal Mukumoto  
**State Forester**

Matt Howard  
**District Forester**



**Town Gulch**

# District Forester's Comments



Welcome to the 2024 Annual Statistical Report for the Northeast Oregon District.

2024 proved to be a historic year for the district across all programs. With continued implementation of the private forest accord, a record-breaking fire season, and the work to help our landowners start the recovery process in the wake of fire season, I am proud of our staff on the district and the work they accomplished. Above all they continued to stay true to our core belief of providing excellent customer service to landowners within the district and to all Oregonians.

For fire season 2024, what appeared to be an average summer ahead quickly proved to be one of the largest fire seasons on record for the district. Starting in late June through early July an extended heat wave sat over the district and quickly dried out fuels across the landscape. Through the first half of July the district kept busy on multiple small fires and assisting our local partners. Some of these fires showed resistance to control efforts that were unusual for early in the fire season. By mid-July conditions were primed for fire growth. On July 17<sup>th</sup> the district was impacted by a large dry lightning event that started multiple fires. The Pendleton unit and Baker Sub-Unit experienced the majority of the new starts out of this storm. On the Pendleton Unit three fires quickly grew to over a thousand acres and eventually became the Battle Mountain Complex that burned approximately 183,000 acres of private, state, and federal lands. On the Baker Sub-Unit the Durkee fire would eventually total 294,265 acres across all ownerships. While these fires made headlines statewide, district fire managers and our fire crews were steadfast in their commitment to service and were successful in suppressing multiple other fires across the district during this event. Multiple other large fires impacted the district throughout the rest of the fire season, including Town Gulch, Winding Waters Complex, and Tiger Creek. Reprieve wouldn't come to the district until mid-October but due to strong tactical firefighting with aid from our landowners, industry and interagency cooperators, the district was successful during the 2024 fire season.

Forestry is alive and well across the Northeast Oregon District. Twelve permanent foresters handle the workload in forest practices, forestry assistance and the forest management of Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife lands. Continued implementation of the Private Forest Accord and the associated changes to the forest practices rules has been crucial in aiding our landowners through the new processes. The Federal Forest Restoration Program implemented multiple Good Neighbor Authority projects across the District adding capacity to the pace and scale of forestry projects in the national forests. District staff also lead in post fire recovery efforts across the state. Prior to fire season 2024 being declared over, multiple district forestry staff deployed to large fires across Eastern Oregon to start collecting critical data to help landowners start planning post fire recovery efforts and gain access to funding.

The District Administrative staff are integral to our success and provide the framework and support to keep the district running as efficiently and effectively as it does. Fire season 2024 has challenged this part of our team and I am proud of their continued efforts to reconcile costs from this historic year while maintaining day to day business operations. The end of 2024 brought about change on the district. District Forester Matt Howard retired officially on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Matt embodied a customer service first attitude in his leadership of the district and during his 30+ years of service to the State of Oregon. That attitude continues on in all district staff who are leaders in the district and statewide.

Thank you for your efforts and continued support.

*Justin Lauer*

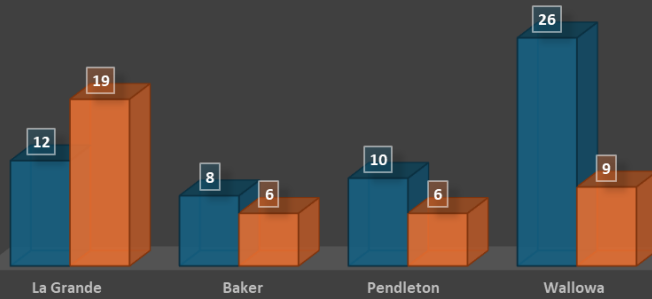
Justin Lauer  
District Forester, Northeast Oregon District

# Protection From Fire Program



FIRES BY CAUSE

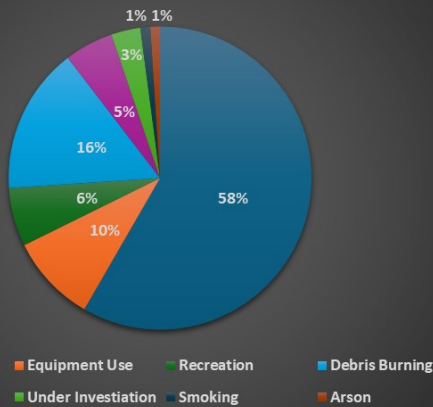
Lightning Human



2024 Significant Fires

Fire	Date	ODF Acres	Total Acres
Durkee	7/17	34,678	294,265
Battle Mt. Complex (Monkey, Snake, NF Owens)	7/17	29,629	85,568
Jack Canyon Mutual Aid	7/17	0	11,349
Powerline Road	7/25	0	2,900
Winding Water Complex (Big Canyon, Mountain View, Charlie Brown, Courtney Creek)	7/25	738	738
Town Gulch	8/5	1,658	18,220
Day Ridge	9/26	2	2

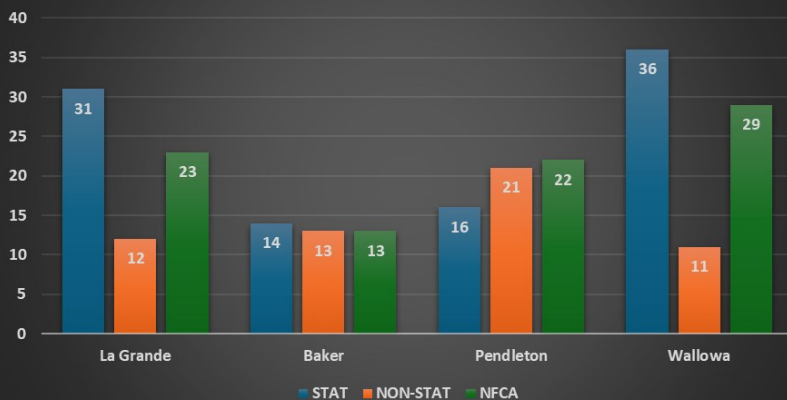
NEO DISTRICT FIRES BY CAUSE



## NEO District Statistical Fire Summary

- 96 total statistical fires, above 10 year average
- 67,635 total acres burned, above 10 year average
- 56 lightning caused fires
  - ⇒ 58% of total statistical fires
  - ⇒ Burned 67,487 acres; 99% of total acres
- 40 human caused fires
  - ⇒ 42% of total statistical fires
  - ⇒ Burned 148 acres; 1% of total acres

FIRES BY UNIT



## NEO District Aircraft Summary

- 3NP (Type 2 Helicopter)
  - ⇒ 105 flight hours
  - ⇒ 941 buckets delivered
- T-885/T-852 (Single Engine Airtanker)
  - ⇒ 242 flight hours
  - ⇒ 33 incident flights
  - ⇒ 151,000 gallons of retardant delivered
- D-65N (Detection Plane)
  - ⇒ 193 flight hours

# Protection From Fire Program



The winter of 2023/2024 was very mild in the NEO district and the snowpack and snow water equivalent were below normal. An El Nino weather pattern brought on a warm and wet spring which contributed to significant fine fuels growth, and coupled with drought stricken 1000 hr fuels, things were lining up to be a busy fire season. All the units in NEO had fires that on any other year would be deemed "significant fires," but a few stood out among the rest.

Fire season 2024 was declared June 22<sup>nd</sup>. The month of July saw hot temperatures, low RH's and higher than normal winds across our district. This resulted in the NEO district moving to high fire danger on July 8<sup>th</sup>, and extreme fire danger a week later, on July 16<sup>th</sup>.

Lightning began in the Baker unit on the morning of July 17<sup>th</sup>, and with poor humidity recoveries, high winds, warm night-time temperatures, and triple digit temperatures by noon, any new starts would spread rapidly and be extremely resistant to control.

The Durkee fire started around 8 am on July 17<sup>th</sup> and quickly grew to 100+ acres not long after the initial report. By the afternoon, multiple air and ground resources were engaged and the fire was chewing through thousands of acres without resistance. Once again, there was no relief from night-time temperatures, RHs, or wind, and the fire continued to burn through multiple control lines.

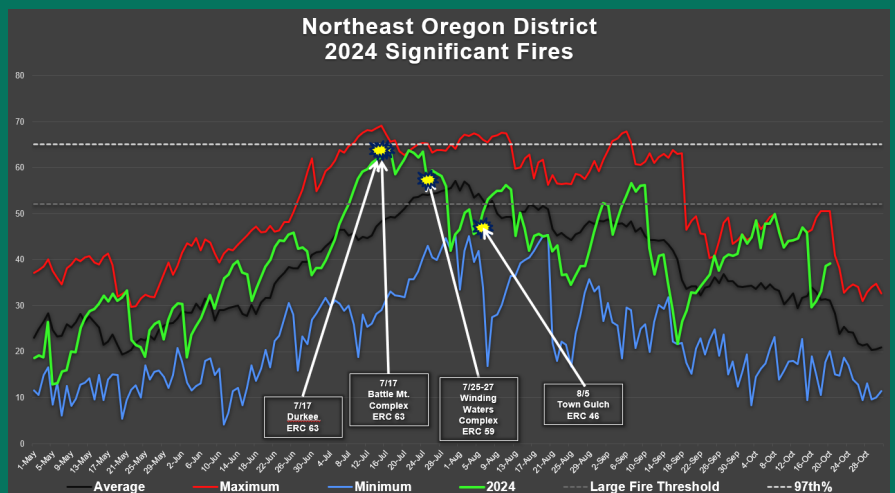
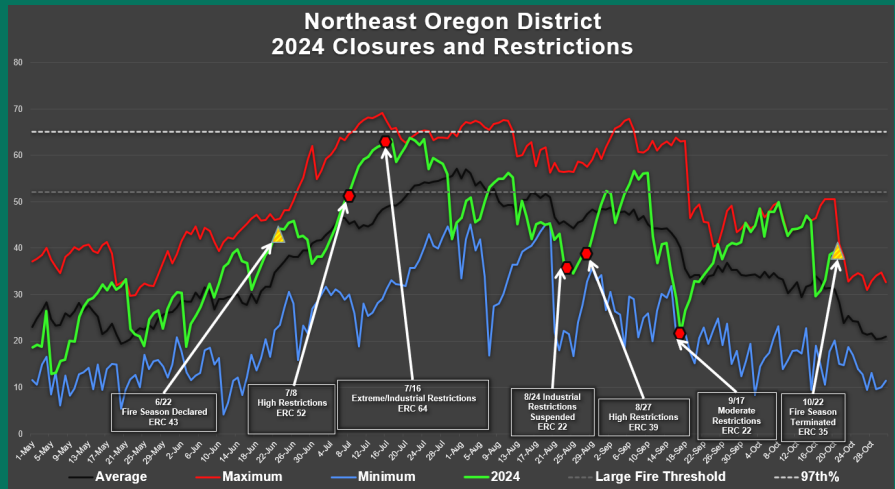
During that afternoon on the Pendleton unit, the beginning of the Battle Mountain Complex took shape. The report of a fire came in from the Log Springs area with multiple ODF and USFS type 6 engines responding. This fire later became known as the N.F. Owens fire. Like the Durkee fire, high winds, hot temperatures, low RH's, difficult terrain, and vegetation, contributed to rapid growth of NF Owens. With NF Owens growing rapidly, multiple other starts were reported over the next few days, and the fires grew into what we know now as the Battle Mountain Complex. Multiple other starts around the district were caught at minimal acreage with the help of our local counterparts within the RFPA's, Rural FD's, USFS, BLM, BIA, Contractors, and countless landowners over the following days.

Just over a week following the Durkee and Battle Mountain complex, the NEO district experienced another cold front which brought more lightning. In the Wallowa unit, the Charlie Brown fire near the Promise Road was reported at 2 acres growing fast with high potential. Less than 20 minutes later it was 25 acres. New Starts continued to pop up- Big Canyon, Mountain View, and Courtney Creek, all later became the Winding Waters Complex.

The district remained heavily engaged in each of the large fires while still aggressively attacking small fires from other lightning strikes.

In the early morning hours of August 5<sup>th</sup>, a cold front was still passing through from the previous evening storms and let down a stray lightning bolt, striking a large Ponderosa Pine in the middle 3<sup>rd</sup> slope of the Eagle Creek Drainage, located within the Baker unit protection boundary. Summit Point lookout reported the fire as a small gray column growing quickly from the Town Gulch drainage. ODF and USFS resources responded and found access and rough terrain proving to be difficult to get resources to this fire. When the first resources arrived on scene it had quickly grown to 5 acres and the next report shortly thereafter was 20+ acres and moving through the timber at the top of the slope. The fire quickly exceeded 100 acres, and the decision was made to order the Northeastern Oregon Interagency type 3 team. The Town Gulch fire was caught at just over 18,000 acres and handed over to the incoming CIMT.

The summer remained hot and dry through the rest of August and September and saw no reprieve in conditions, leading to a long and drawn-out conclusion to fire season 2024. Fire season was declared on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and 100 days later it was terminated September 30<sup>th</sup>. NEO recorded 96 Stat fires as a district, which is 25 above our 10-year average. Of the those 96 Stat fires, 56 were lightning caused, which contributed to the majority of our acres burned.



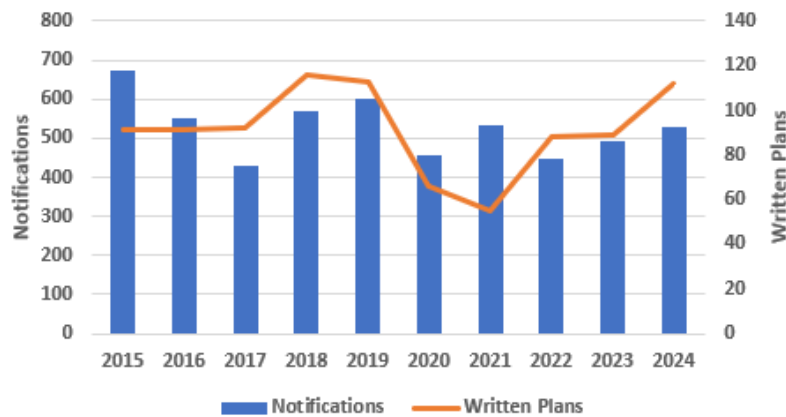


# Private Forest Programs



## Forest Practices Administration

FPA 10 Year Comparison



- 306 FPA Inspections were completed
- 43 Fire Inspections were completed
- 3 FPA citations were issued
- 0 FPA warnings were issued
- 1 FPA Unsatisfactory conditions was issued

### ODFW

Completed final purchase of the  
Minam Wildlife area  
16,646 acres

## Forestry Assistance

NRCS EQIP Inventories	9,454 Acres
NRCS EQIP Layouts	8,270 Acres
NRCS EQIP Certifications	3,507 Acres
Tech Assists	13,694 Acres
District Wide RCPP Contracted	1,368 Acres
District Wide RCPP Certification	451 Acres
Stewardship Plans	1 Plans
Basic Forest Management Plan (Under the AFF Agreement)	57 Plans
PLFN (Distributed)	44,000 Seedlings
PLFN (Stored for Manulife)	965,684 Seedlings

### Forestry Assistance Funding Source

#### Wallowa Unit

- \*Wallowa County Ready, Set, Go! Program & Lake Basin Fuels Reduction Project WSFM Grant
- \*Wallowa North NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Project
- \*Wallowa Front Fuel Reduction NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Project
- \*Lostine Firewise Community Grant
- \*Hurricane Creek Defensible Space Grant

#### Pendleton Unit

- \*Umatilla South County Defensible Space Grant
- \*Umatilla McKay Fuels WSFM Grant
- \*JDU Basin Forest Resiliency NRCS Conservation Implementation Strategy
- \*ODF Umatilla SFG

#### La Grande Unit

- \*NRCS IRA
- \*Morgan Lake Defensible Space Grant
- \*Grande Ronde River Hazard Fuels Project
- \*Union County CWDG
- \*Mt Harris CA Grant
- \*West Valley Forest Management NRCS Conservation Implementation Strategy
- \*Morgan Lake Firewise Community

#### Baker Sub-Unit

- \*OSFM Defensible Space Pine Valley
- \*Baker Watershed National Water Quality Initiative
- \*Spring Creek Firewise Fuels Reduction & Fire Prevention CA Grant
- \*Pine Valley/Eagleton Firewise Fuels Reduction WSFM Grant

#### District-Wide

- \*East Oregon Forest Restoration NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Project

## Fuel Reduction Grants

Units within Northeast Oregon District	Acres Thinned (2024)	Acres Thinned (2002 To 2024)
Baker Sub-Unit (Baker County)	272	8,613
La Grande Unit (Union County)	1930	8,234
Pendleton Unit (Umatilla County)	274	6,818
Wallowa Unit (Wallowa County)	150	8,801
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,626</b>	<b>32,466</b>

# Federal Forest Restoration Program



## Federal Forest Restoration Program

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature took an innovative step to fund the Federal Forest Restoration (FFR) Program, with the explicit intent of increasing the amount of active restoration actions on our federal forests and supporting job creation and economic recovery in rural economies. In 2014 congress authorized the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) which allows the use of federal funds to support state agency work on federal forest projects.

In 2024 the NEO FFR Program filled a vacated Natural Resource Specialist 1 (NRS1) position with a recently hired Forest Management Technician (FMT) and carried the vacant FMT position for the remainder of the year. FFR personnel aided NEO District in numerous wildfire tasks, including suppression, investigation, finance, logistics, and recon flights. FMT personnel were utilized to aid the Forest Service in completing prescribed burning, wildlife surveys, avian surveys, pathology surveys, stand exams, and other data gathering missions critical to NEPA planning. NRS1, NRS2 and FMT personnel completed and/or initiated layout and prepping of two GNA timber sales, which are located on the following Forests and Districts:

- Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Whitman Ranger District, West Wall 2 GNA Timber Sale, layout complete.
- Umatilla National Forest, Heppner Ranger District, Little Big Rock GNA Timber Sale, layout complete.

In 2024, NEO FFR personnel administered timber sales, and thinning contracts as follows:

- Umatilla National Forest, Walla Walla Ranger District, Elbow GNA Timber Sale, operating.
- Umatilla National Forest, North Fork of the John Day District, Davis Mastication Thinning Contract, operating.
- Wallowa-Whitman, Whitman District, Sparta GNA Thinning Contract, completed.

Once sold or awarded, utilizing an ODF Timber Sale Contract or Service Contract, ODF personnel will administer the timber sale contracts and thinning contracts, and timber sale receipts will reimburse ODF for expenses related to sale prep and administration. Remaining receipts will be applied to work on upcoming restoration projects.

Federal Forest Restoration Program Federal Timber Sale Projects Supported in 2024		
National Forest	Ranger District	Sale Acres
FS Survey (Stand Exam, Wildlife, etc.) / Project Recon / RX		
Wallowa - Whitman/ Umatilla	All Forest	8,785
Timber Sale / Thinning: recon, prep, admin		
Umatilla	NFJD	135
Umatilla	Heppner	650
Wallowa-Whitman	Whitman	100
Wallowa-Whitman	Whitman	800
Umatilla	Walla-Walla	250
Total		5,297

\*For the 2024-25 biennium, FFRP awarded \$260,000 towards a heritage survey contract on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

### Firewise Community

The National Fire Protection Association's "Firewise USA" recognition program is designed to teach people how to live with wildfire and increase their home and property's chance of survival through proactive actions, while encouraging neighbors to work together to reduce losses and damage.

**2024 Wallowa County**  
Lostine Firewise 762 Grant

### **2024 NEO Personnel Changes New Hires/Promotions/Retirements**

**Jess Yarborough**—Hired as a Permanent Forest Officer, Wallowa Unit.

**Matt Howard**—Retired as NEO's District Forester after 38 years of service to the landowners of Oregon. Matt will continue to service as the Incident Commander of IMT2. Thank you from the entire district for all your commitment and leadership.

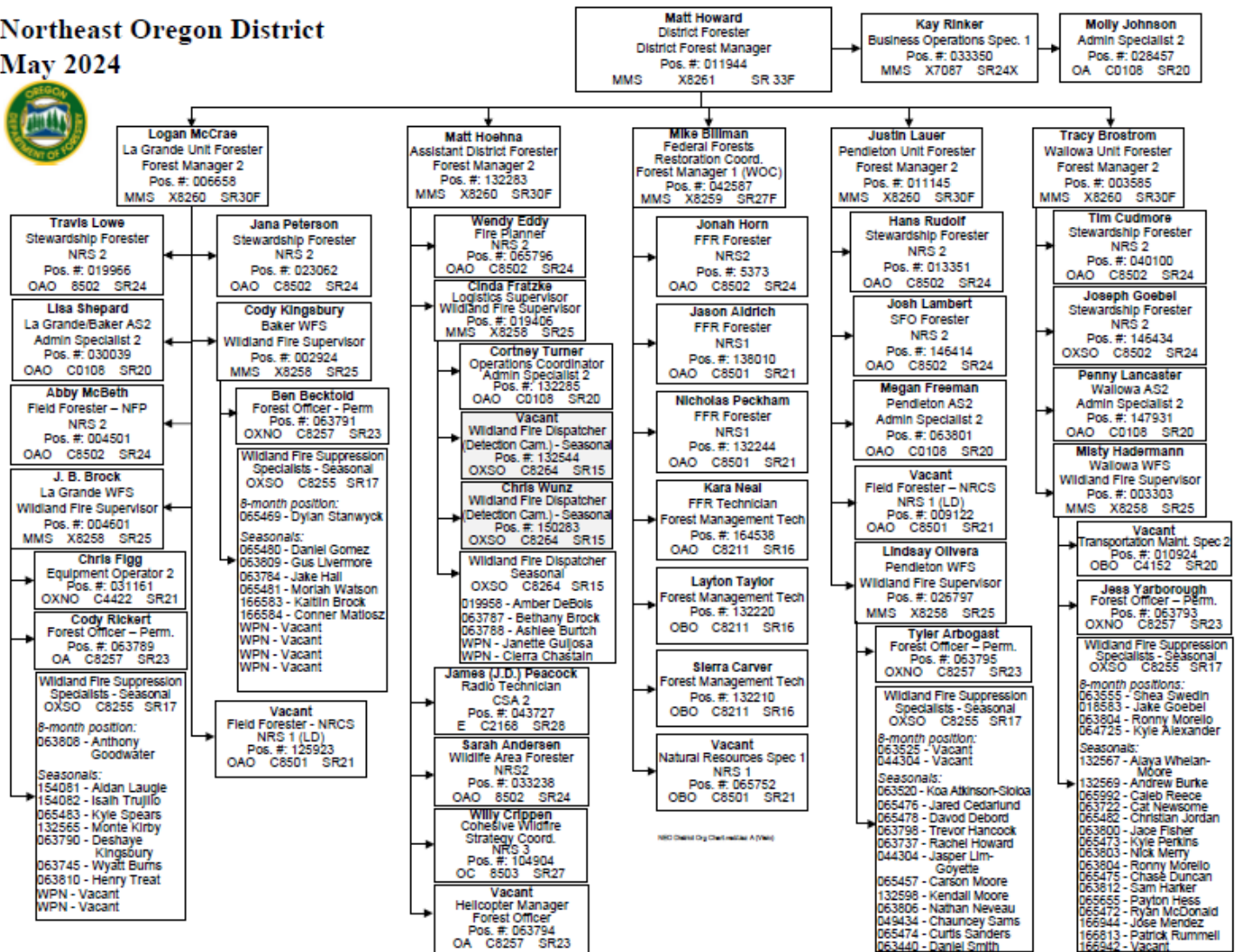
"Keep one foot in the black"

### Cooperative Work Program

The District seeks out and utilizes a variety of work opportunities with private, State and Federal Cooperators which provide cross-training opportunities for permanent employees, and additional employment for many of our seasonals. In 2024, several employees worked for the Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Hancock Forest Management, and other private landowners.

# Northeast Oregon District

May 2024



## 2024 Northeast Oregon District Budget Committee Members

**Chris Heffernan**, Union County, Forest Landowner and NEO Budget Committee Chairman; EOFPA Member  
**Bob Messinger**, Union County, Forest Landowner  
**Jered Schwabauer**, Harvest Operations Manager for Hancock Forest Management; EOFPA President  
**Clint Johnson**, Baker County, Forest Landowner and Rancher  
**Pat Sullivan**, Baker County, Forest Landowner & Rancher  
**Elwayne Henderson**, Wallowa County, Forest Landowner & Forest Operator  
**Chris Cunningham**, Wallowa County, Forest Landowner & Rancher  
**Hank Howard**, Umatilla County, Forest & Rangeland Manager for Pacific Northwest Tree Farm  
**Bobby Corey**, Umatilla County, Forest Landowner & Rancher Representing Pendleton Ranches/Cunningham Sheep Co; EOFPA member

EOFPA = East Oregon Forest Protective Association