

Northeast Oregon District 2023 Statistical Report

LA GRANDE UNIT
BAKER SUB UNIT
PENDLETON UNIT
WALLOWA UNIT



Cal Mukumoto
State Forester

Matt Howard
District Forester

Thompson



Jones Butte



Grossman



District Forester's Comments



Welcome to the 2023 Annual Statistical Report for the Northeast Oregon District.

2023 was a memorable year for the district, across all programs. Our personnel continued to provide excellent customer service this past year to our landowners and Oregonians in general. The district employees are closely tied in with our constituents and they were diligent in accomplishing our mission in a safe and effective manner.

For Fire Season 2023, a warm and dry spring brought the threat of an incredibly trying fire season to the District. Fortunately, timely June rains and cooler temperatures tempered the start of fire season to a normal timeframe of June 22nd. The impact of the drier early spring cured the fine fuels in our lower elevations leading to several challenging fires on the Pendleton Unit in late June that threatened and burned paying land. Early July was very quiet from a fire standpoint, which allowed our protection staff to focus on crew development and training. The latter half of July brought high fire danger with several challenging human-caused fires that put the district's fire organization to the test. These fires required strong leadership and the right mix of resources and assistance from our interagency partners and industrial cooperators to successfully control. The Jones Butte Fire, Grossman Fire and the Thompson Fire were an incredible firefight in their own right in late July. The fire managers held all three of these fires at a Type 4 complexity minimizing the impacts to the OFLPP. The remnants of Hurricane Hilary impacted the east side of the NEO District bringing rain totals from one inch to over 6 inches of rain over an extended period of time. The west side of the District stayed at a heightened alert due to the lack of precipitation through the third week of August working numerous fires that tested our firefighters. Due to strong tactical firefighting with aid from our interagency cooperators, much success was realized until an unsettled weather pattern set in for the remainder of fire season. The assistance of our interagency partners, landowner community and industrial contractors again proved to be a vital part of our success.

The NEO District continues to lead forestry efforts in the region. 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 Forests 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. The Northern Blues All-Lands Partnership celebrated many accomplishments this past year showcasing support for several key projects.

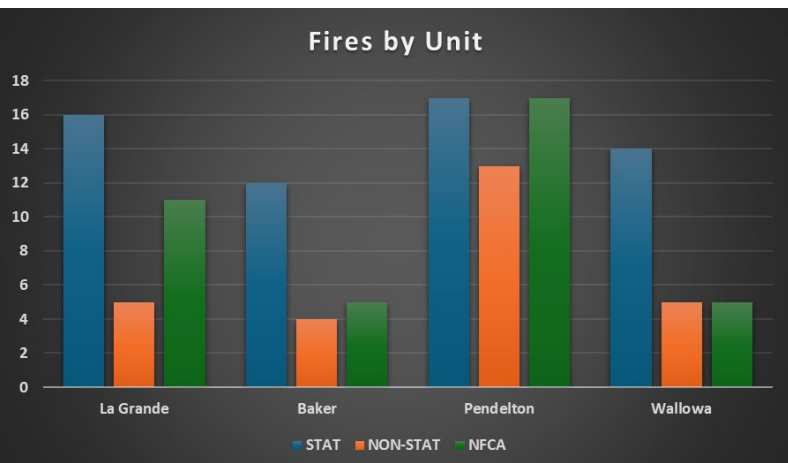
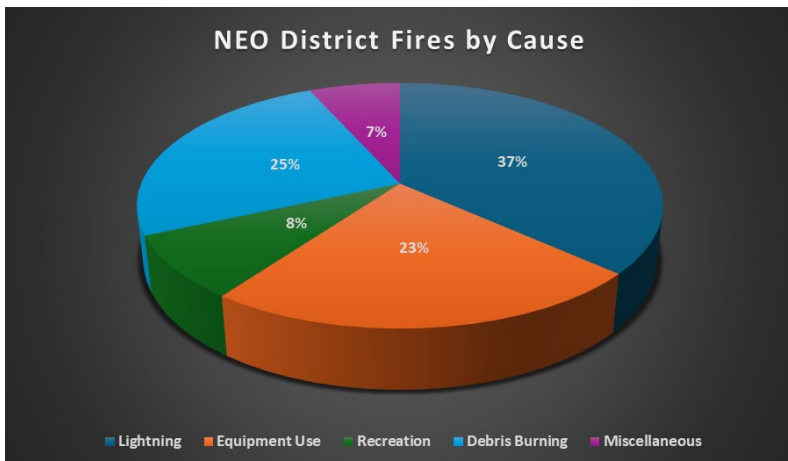
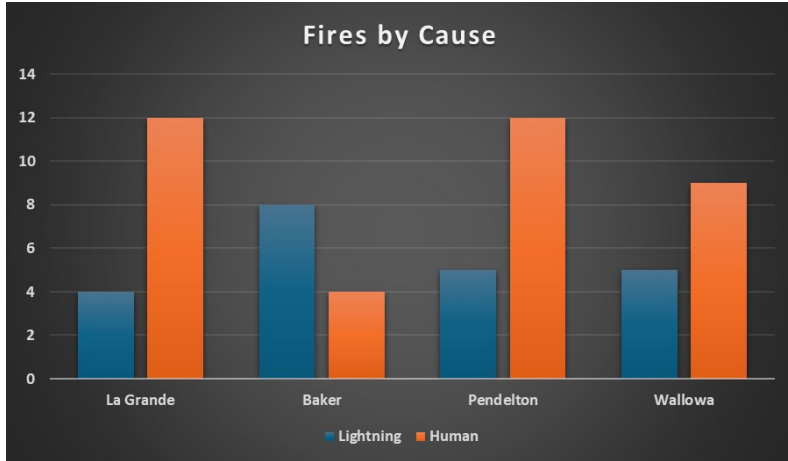
The District Administrative staff are leaders in their field and continue to provide expertise and professionalism supporting the work we do. They are integral to our success and provide the framework and support to keep the district running as efficiently and effectively as it does.

The NEO District is blessed with fire and forestry professionals that exhibit leadership not only within our communities but across the state as well. Our employees are fully embedded with the concept of providing excellent customer service and I am proud of the work they do on a daily basis.

Thank you for your efforts and continued support.

Matt Howard
District Forester, Northeast Oregon District

Protection From Fire Program



2023 Significant Fires

Fire	Date	ODF Acres	Total Acres
Albee	6/30	46.05	46.05
Jones Butte	7/27	115	115
Grossman	7/31	152.75	152.75
Thompson	8/3	8	34
Pearson	8/10	11	11
Snipe Creek	8/10	38.3	38.3

- ### NEO District Statistical Fire Summary
- 59 total statistical fires was below average
 - 512.84 total acres burned was below average
 - 22 lightning caused fires
 - ⇒ 37% of total statistical fires
 - ⇒ burned 111.66 acres; 22% of total acres
 - 37 human caused fires
 - ⇒ 63% of total statistical fires
 - ⇒ burned 401.18 acres; 78% of total acres

- ### NEO District Aircraft Summary
- **3NP** (Type 2 Helicopter)
 - ⇒ 57.9 flight hours
 - ⇒ 15 incidents
 - ⇒ 738 buckets delivered
 - **T-869** (Single Engine Airtanker)
 - ⇒ 45.74 flight hours
 - ⇒ 19 incident flights
 - ⇒ 32,401 gallons of retardant delivered
 - **T-822** (Single Engine Airtanker)
 - ⇒ 46.34 flight hours
 - ⇒ 19 incident flights
 - ⇒ 33,307 gallons of retardant delivered
 - **D-018** (Detection Plane)
 - ⇒ 70.39 flight hours

Protection From Fire Program



The winter of 2022/2023 had unprecedented snowfall amounts across the west. In the Northeastern Oregon District, we received well above average snowfall amounts in the mountains. We saw the late onset of spring and much of it was wet. This delayed the threat of fire season significantly. During the month of June, we saw temperatures rise but in combination of abundant ground moisture, it resulted in a significant growth of fine fuels.

Due to the warmer than average June, the fast-approaching Independence Day, and the human caused fire activity across the district, Northeast Oregon District declared fire season on June 22nd and shortly thereafter on July 3rd NEO entered into high fire danger (Regulated Use Closure). Warm and dry weather conditions continued in July with periods of cooler and wetter weather than average. The 2nd half of July turned hot and dry and in a 25-day period we experienced 6 of our 8 significant fires. 6 of those 8 significant fires were human caused while the last two significant fires of the season were lightning caused. August saw an unprecedented amount of rain with many RAWs across the district recording more than 3" of rain during that one storm event. Although abundant lightning followed these rainstorms most areas received heavy rain which resulted in very few fires. On August 4th NEO district entered their 2nd phase of Regulated Use Closure, increasing fire danger from High to Extreme. We stayed in Extreme fire danger for just over 2 weeks and then decreased our fire danger back to phase 1 of Regulated Use Closure, high fire danger on August 22nd. Small fires and inconsistent weather extended our fire season for well over a month, but on September 30th, NEO District terminated fire season as we finally saw a reprieve in weather, and some consistent wet and cool conditions across the district.

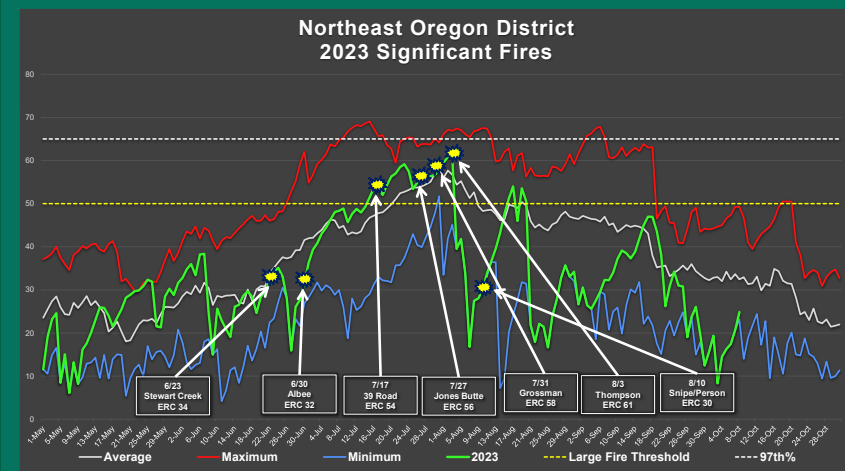
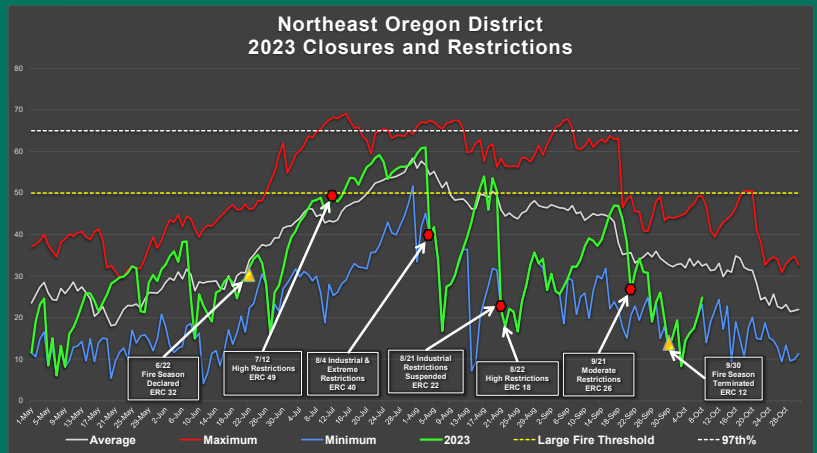
Our first two significant fires of the year took place on the Pendleton Unit. Stewart Creek fire started on 6/23 and was caused by an escaped debris burn and spread to 484 acres. Although the fire threatened ODF protection, the fire was held from crossing onto ODF protected ground. The Albee fire started on 6/30 and was human caused and burned 46 acres, all of which were ODF protected.

The 39 Road fire in the Baker Unit started on 7/17 and burned 5.3 acres. The fire was due to a small dwelling that burned down and spread to wildland. It was a great catch in a very bad spot thanks to the efforts of the Baker Unit, and the Federal and Rural partners who provided a quick response.

The Jones Butte fire on the La Grande unit started on 7/27 around noon and was sparked by a green cottonwood tree limb falling on a powerline. The fire spread impressively quick and forward progression was stopped at 115 acres by dusk that same day.

The Grossman Fire started on 7/31 in the Wallowa unit, just 4 days after the Jones butte fire had started. Because of the thorough suppression efforts during mop-up, Jones Butte was able to send many of the resources that were on their fire to the Grossman fire to help with suppression efforts. Dozer line was completed around Grossman in the first operational shift which allowed resources to make quick work of their mop-up efforts over the following days.

Just 4 short days later, the Thompson fire on the Baker unit was started by a vehicle along Highway 7. The fire moved quickly up the steep slope and through the cured grass. The aforementioned rain event moved in that afternoon, and significant rainfall coupled with aggressive initial attack halted the spread of this fire at 34 acres.



On August 10th, not just one but two significant fires broke out on the Pendleton unit. Both were lightning caused. Snipe creek was just over 38 acres, while the Pearson fire was held to 11. Limited resources and readily available fuels made these difficult but great catches by the local unit.

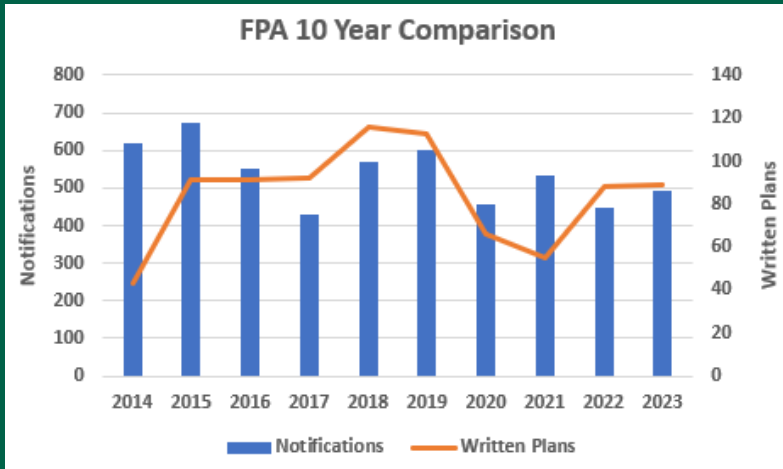
NEO recorded 59 stat fires in 2023, which is 17 below the 10 year average. 513 acres were burned on ODF protected lands, which is 8,252 acres below average. Lightning fires were well below the 10 year average at 22, while the human caused fires were well above the average with 37. NEO district was in fire season for 100 days which is well below the 10 year average of 116.

Overall, NEO had a very successful year in suppression. Aggressive initial attack, outstanding partnerships with our neighboring agencies, and a little help from weather aided in some great catches across the district throughout fire season 2023.

Private Forest Programs



Forest Practices Administration



- 315 FPA Inspections were completed
- 46 Fire Inspections were completed
- No FPA citations were issued
- 2 FPA warnings were issued
- 2 FPA Unsatisfactory conditions was issued

ODFW
 Elkhorn—1.2 MMBF Harvested
 10,964 acres purchased in Minam Block
 Minam Wildlife area total; 15,573 acres

Forestry Assistance

NRCS EQIP Inventories	12,154 Acres
NRCS EQIP Layouts	9,971 Acres
NRCS EQIP Certifications	4,283 Acres
Tech Assists	7,577 Acres
District Wide RCPP Contracted	1,653 Acres
District Wide RCPP Certification	1,367 Acres
Stewardship Plans	1 Plans
Basic Forest Management Plan (Under the AFF Agreement)	34 Plans
PLFN (Distributed)	42,000 Seedlings
PLFN (Stored for Manulife)	1,205,000 Seedlings
PLFN (Stored for Green Diamond)	15,940 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

La Grande Unit

- *Morgan Lake Defensible Space Grant
- *Grande Ronde River Hazard Fuels Project
- *Mt Emily National Fire Plan Grant
- *West Valley Forest Management NRCS Conservation Implementation Strategy
- *Central Grande Ronde Fuels LRP

Baker Sub-Unit

- *Pine Valley Firewise Community Grant
- *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 (2023)	Acres Thinned (2002 To 2023)
Baker Sub-Unit (Baker County)	272	8,341
La Grande Unit (Union County)	447	6,304
Pendleton Unit (Umatilla County)	213	6,544
Wallowa Unit (Wallowa County)	130	8,651
TOTAL	1,062	29,840

Federal Forest Restoration Program



Federal Forest Restoration Program

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature took an innovative step to fund the Federal Forest Restoration Program (FFRP), 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 2023 the NEO FFR Program added a NRS2 Forester and filled a vacated Forest Management Technician (FMT) position. FMT personnel were utilized to aid the Forest Service in completing soil surveys for tethered logging, stand exams, heritage surveys, contract administration on thinning contracts, and other data gathering missions. NRS1 personnel and FMT's completed and/or initiated layout and prepping of one GNA timber sale, which is located on the following Forest and District:

- Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Whitman Ranger District, West Wall GNA, Layout Complete.

In 2023, NEO FFR personnel have sold or administered timber sales, and thinning contracts as follows:

- Umatilla National Forest, Walla Walla Ranger District, Elbow GNA Timber Sale, Sold.
- Wallowa-Whitman, La Grande District, South Catherine Decks GNA, Completed.
- Umatilla National Forest, North Fork of the John Day District, Davis Mastication Thinning Contract, Operating.
- Wallowa-Whitman, Whitman District, Sparta GNA Thinning Contract, Operating.

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.

FFRP performed timber related duties on Forest Service and GNA projects for combined acreage totals as follows:

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

Federal Forest Restoration Program Federal Timber Sale Projects Supported in 2023		
National Forest	Ranger District	Sale Acres
FS Survey (Stand Exam, Soil, Heritage)/ Admin Assistance/Rx		
Wallowa - Whitman/ Umatilla	All Forest	3,627
Sale/Thinning, Prep, Sell, Administer, Award		
Umatilla	NFJD	335
Wallowa-Whitman	La Grande	70
Wallowa-Whitman	Whitman	230
Wallowa-Whitman	Whitman	530
Umatilla	Walla-Walla	505
Total		5,297

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.

2023 Baker County

Pine Valley Firewise 762 Grant
Pine Valley/Eagleton Firewise WSFM Grant
Ritter Firewise 762 Grant

2023 Wallowa County

Lostine Firewise 762 Grant

*45 Site Visits, 45 Defensible Space Plans, 74 Acres Treated, 75 Hazardous Tree Removed

2023 NEO Personnel Changes New Hires/Promotions/Retirements

Misty Hadermann—Hired as a Wildland Fire Supervisor, Wallowa Unit.

Penny Lancaster—Hired as an Administrative Specialist, Wallowa Unit.

Cortney Turner—Hired as an Administrative Specialist, BMIDC.

Wendy Eddy—Hired as a Fire Planner, District

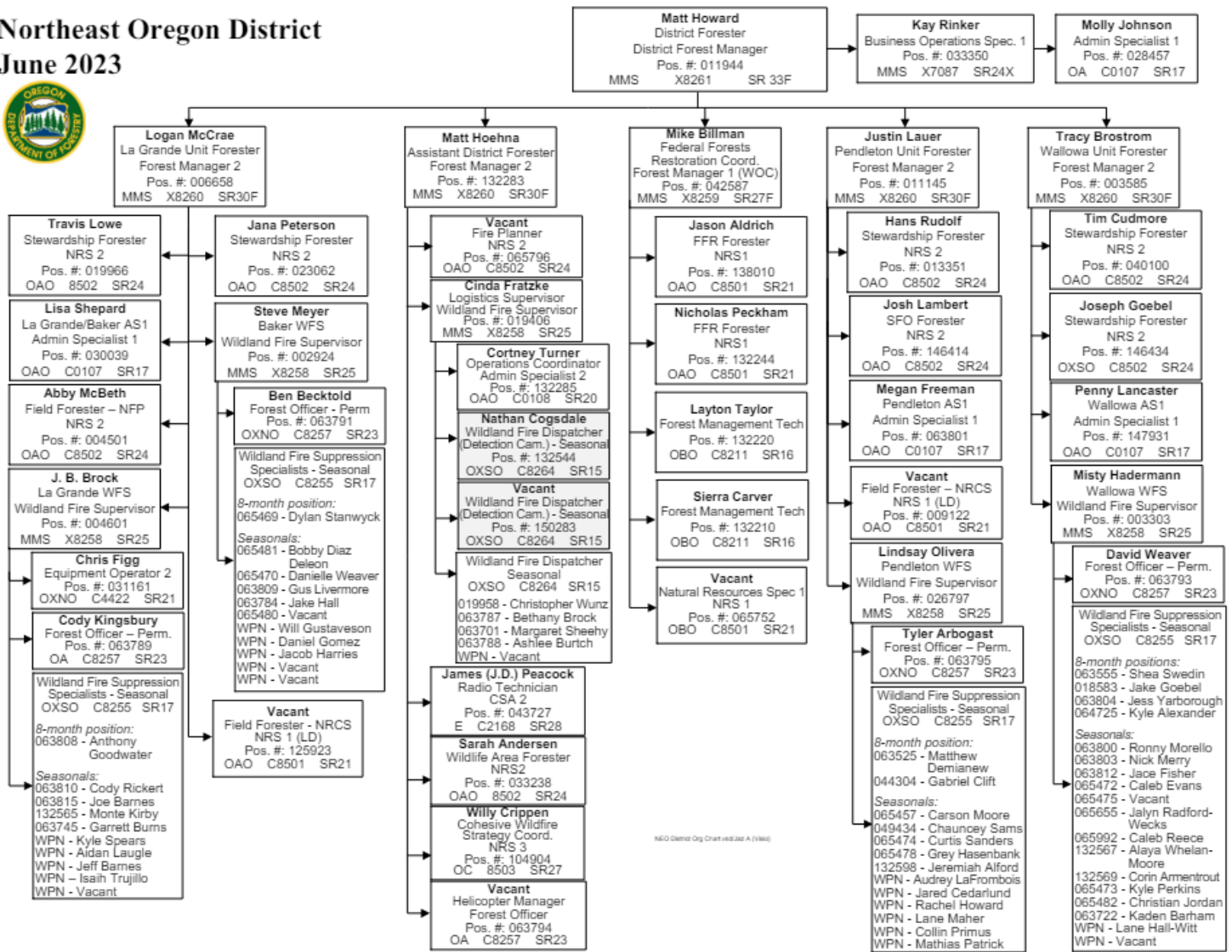
Steve Meyer—Accepted a position as the EOA Rangeland Specialist.

David Weaver—Retired, after 40+ years of Service with the Oregon Department of Forestry! **We miss you already!!**

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 2023, 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
June 2023



2023 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