

Western Lane District Annual Report 2023



Weyerhaeuser Helicopter 82W and Western Lane's Tender 36



WESTERN LANE'S DISTRICT FORESTER OLE BUCH



Greetings and welcome to the 2023 Western Lane Annual Report! 2023 started off with a mild winter, which was welcomed considering the extremely dry winter experienced during the previous year. But as mentioned in the 2022 annual report, the dry 2022 winter led to a wet spring and significantly reduced fire activity throughout the summer of 2022. 2023 was the exact opposite. We had a reasonably wet winter, but from the end of April on, we experienced extremely dry conditions. Our fuels quickly responded to this dry weather, resulting in a very busy fire season, which was declared about one month sooner than our average start date.

The 2023 fire season was likely the busiest in decades. We had three Type 3 fires (7K, Moon Mountain, Haight Creek), two significant lightning events resulting in 11 fire starts, and multiple fires requiring extended attack. In addition, we were able to provide assistance to the Siuslaw National Forest on the 3 Buttes fire and were even able to assist in Kentucky and Alberta, Canada during our shoulder seasons. I owe a huge

thanks to the district staff, the Western Lane Protective Association, and our network of landowners, operators, and partnering agencies during this difficult season. Without them, we would not have been as successful minimizing the cost and loss caused by the fires.

Even though we had a historically busy fire season, we still had other core business to conduct. Some examples of core business that kept us busy include:

- Implementation of the new Forest Practice Rules created by the Private Forest Accord
- Treatment of new Sudden Oak Death infection sites
- Implementation of a new short-term Implementation Plan on State Forests ownership
- Application of new fuels reduction grants
- Implementation of Workday Payroll software

As mentioned in previous annual reports, I continue to be impressed by my coworkers at Western Lane. Their resiliency, positive attitude, and work ethic during challenging times is motivating to me. I'm truly thankful every day for getting to work with such a great team!

Ole Buch
Western Lane District Forester

WESTERN LANE STATE FORESTS UNIT

Western Lane District manages 53,555 acres (roughly 80% BOF and 20% CSL) of forestland within Lane, Douglas, Coos, Curry, Jackson, and Josephine Counties.

Three timber sales were auctioned in FY24, totaling 9.3 million board feet and averaging \$615/MBF.

Maple Gulch consisted of 48 acres of salvaged timber resulting from the 2022 Rum Creek Fire. The unit located just east of Galice in Josephine County and was 100% Common School Land.

Roughage was a 105-acre modified clearcut in Lane County on BOF land.

North Pat was a 128-acre modified clearcut in Lane County on BOF land.

Assistant District Forester - Chet Behling oversees the State Forests Management Unit.

NRS2 - Jason Hayzlett- T&E Coordination, Contract Administration, Sale Planning.

NRS2 – John Enos- Reforestation and Young Stand Management.

NRS1 – Kylie Husman- Reforestation and Timber Sale Layout.

NRS1 – Morgan Kawakami - Roads Specialist and Timber Sale Layout, promoted to NRS3 Roads Contract Specialist position working for the State Forests Division.

NRS1 – Griffin Puls - Roads Specialist and Timber Sale Layout, was hired to backfill Morgan’s vacant position. Griffin comes to us from the Tillamook ODF Roads Unit.



John feels the burn



John & Griffin plant trees with Randy Smith



Kylie & Griffin braving the cold



Griffin finds his bearings



Kylie, Randy Smith, Griffin & John plant trees at Walker Tower with ODFW personnel

VENETA FUELS REDUCTION



Standing: McKenna Armantrout, James Macklin, Dayton Ricks, Kyle Schwartz, Tev Erlambang & Keegan Ferro
Kneeling: Kate Johns & Seth Griffith

The Western Lane district has now been successful in funding a fuels crew and rebate program since 2010. The goal of this program is the mitigation of hazardous fuels for private landowners, developing Firewise Communities, public outreach/education, and local partner collaboration. The program has received nearly 5 million dollars in funding from 18 successful grant applications within the last 10 years. This funding has led to the reduction of over 2,000 acres of hazardous fuels, including 30 miles of roadways brushed and 20 water holes opened. Along with hazardous fuel treatments, the program has successfully created 17 Firewise Communities (7 of which are currently in “active” status), provided chipping days to the active Firewise Communities, and established outreach events around the district, such as at the Lane County Fair and Home and Garden Show. Additionally, during 2023, the program applied for 5 new grants; 1 has been awarded and 3 moved on to the second phase of review.

The program is continuing to expand hiring opportunities and adding capacity to the Protection program. The 2023 Fuels Crew was fortunate enough to support several new employment opportunities, including a Fire Planning Fuel Management Technician (FMT), a Community Wildfire Forester, and two new Fuels Crew Members. Furthermore, movement within the program has allowed individuals to advance into developmental leadership roles. Between the 2022 and 2023 fuel season, there were a total of 10 personnel involved in the program. The fuels crew has had a range of qualifications, including Engine Boss, Task Force Leader, FF1, and FF2.

Fuels Crew Supervisor:

- Casey Smith

Community Wildfire Forester:

- McKenna Armantrout

Fuel Management Technicians (FMT):

- Kate Johns
- Chris Romero
- Seth Griffith (Developmental)

Fuels Crew Laborers:

- Kyle Schwartz
- Tevin Erlambang
- Keegan Ferro
- Dayton Ricks
- James Macklin



The crew preps for the day

Hazardous Fuel Mitigation Projects

Hazardous fuels in the forest environment are accumulations of vegetation which have the potential to increase fire activity. The type and arrangement of vegetation growing within 50’-200’ feet of homes impact how fire behaves near homes. The hazardous fuel mitigation crew works on improving defensible space within district boundaries. In the last year, the district’s hard working and dedicated crew has treated over 200 acres of defensible space and fuels reduction throughout the grant areas. The crew cuts and chips blackberries and tree limbs along with suppressed/dying conifers, often in areas with poison oak. So far, between the 2022 and through the 2023 season, the crew has received at least 10 documented letters of gratitude from landowners around the district and multiple calls to the office regarding appreciation and gratitude for their hard work. The grant program also received an “Outstanding Partner Award” from the Long Tom Watershed Council.

Federal Hazardous Fuel Reduction Grant Projects worked on in 2023 include:

Finalized: Chickahominy Communities:

- 178 acres (88% of goal reached).
- 1 Firewise Community established.
- 12 outreach events.

In-Progress: Long Tom:

- 150 acres (74% of goal).
- 1 Firewise Community established.
- 14 outreach events.



In-Progress: Fox Hollow:

- 40 acres (22% of goal).
- 4 active Firewise Communities.
- 1 prospective Firewise Community.
- 11 outreach events.
- Major focus for winter, 2024.

Recently Awarded: Florence Communities:

- 2 acres (1% of goal).
- 1 active Firewise Community.
- 1 prospective Firewise Community.
- 3 outreach events.
- Fuels Crew work planned for April, 2024.



Keegan Ferro

Recently Awarded: Lynx Hollow:

- 13 acres (6% of goal).
- 2 outreach events.
- Partnering with Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council and Oregon State University Extension.
- Currently working on Post-Treatment, Long-Term Maintenance Plan for landowners.
- Work planned for May, 2024.
-

Alternate funding sources in 2023 included:

Finalized: South Willamette Valley WUI (SB-762):

- 189 acres (100% of goal reached).
- 2 active Firewise Communities.
- 6 outreach events.
- Partnered with Long Tom Watershed Council and Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council.

Finalized City of Veneta Agreement:

- 8 private properties treated.
- 3 City of Veneta properties treated.

In-Progress Willamette Valley Oak Landscape Scale Restoration:

- South Willamette Valley Oak Management Plan Template developed.
- Oak Management Brochure created and distributed.
- Process Flowchart drafted.
- 34 landowner meetings.
- 12 agency stakeholder meetings.
- 1 Oak Management Workshop.

In-Progress BLM Community Assistance Agreement:

- 9 miles of road brushed.
- 9 outreach events.

Additionally, the fuels crew had the unique opportunity to collaborate with a Northwest Youth Corps crew on an HOA property in Eugene. The crew was able to offer technical assistance to the NYC crew members, helping them with tree cutting and giving advice on ODF career opportunities.

Grant Applications:

During 2023, the grant program applied for 5 new grants, including the Community Assistance Grant, Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG), Landscape Scale Restoration Grant, Small Forestland Owner Grant, and Western States Fire Managers (WSFM) Grant. Both the CWDG and WSFM Grant moved on to the second phase of scoring, with anticipated notice of award in the spring of 2024. The grant program was awarded the WSFM Florence Communities Grant and the Lynx Hollow Community Assistance Grant this year as well. In 2024, the Long Tom Grant will be closed out.

Challenges and Obstacles:

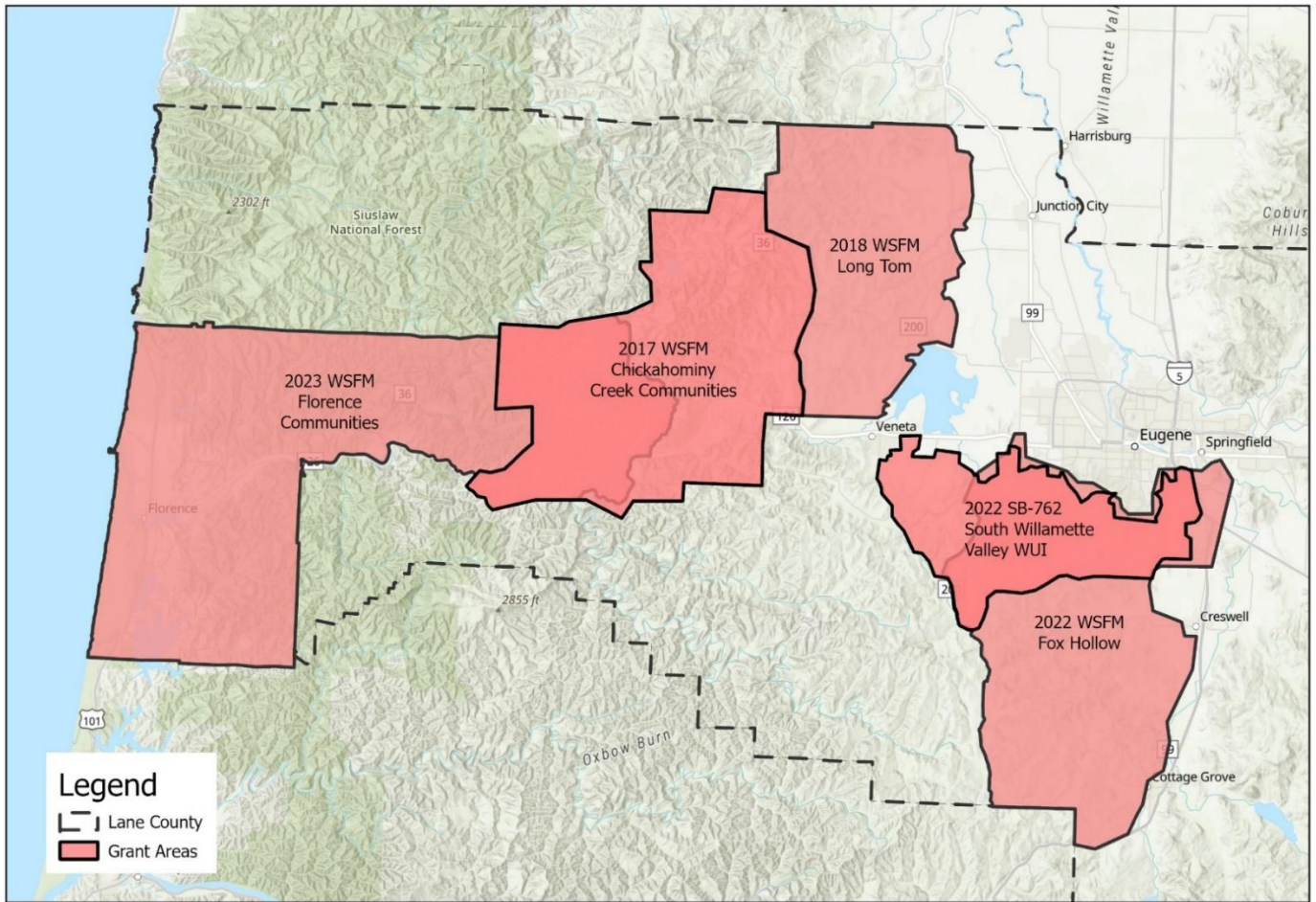
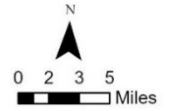
From the beginning, the program’s projects have been presented with several challenges including increasing costs, high employee turnover, low personnel numbers, extended fire seasons, and fuels crew equipment issues. Increasingly high rates for travel, supplies, and personnel, combined with a small fuels crew, has made reaching goal acres while staying within budget difficult. Along with the increasing cost in travel, the need for new equipment and the frequent breakdown of older equipment has been a strain on the budgets. Western Lane has also experienced high employee turnover, which takes time and money away from the grant for orientation and training each year. Furthermore, the 2023 fire season started much earlier than normal, with the 7K fire in May, which took time away from working toward goal acreages. All challenges add to the inability to reach full goal acreage while staying within budget.



Seth James McKenna Kyle Tev Kate Keegan



2023 Western Lane ODF Grant Areas

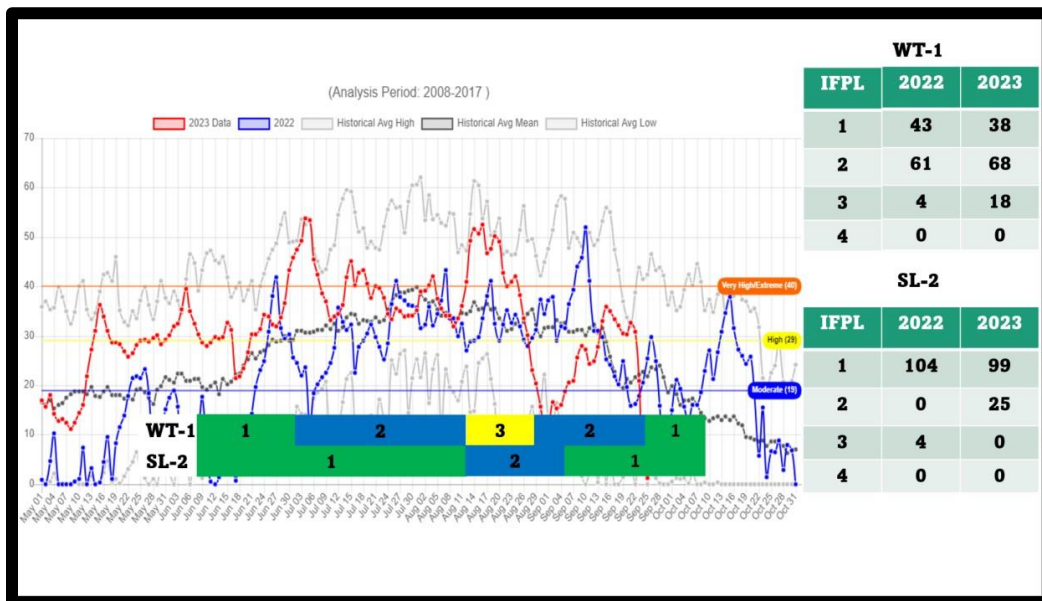


PROTECTION

The Western Lane district was challenged in 2023 with one of the busiest fire seasons in recent history. New 20-year records were set for earliest fire season start date, statistical fire responses, and acres burned (aside from the 2014 Yellow Point fire acreage). The district responded to 87 stat fires for a total of 565 acres burned. 86% of these fires were human caused, accounting for 99% of the total acres burned. Transient caused fires have been on the rise for the past few years and 2023 was a particularly big year with 26 fires and 35.3 acres burned as a result. The district saw 4 total operator fires. 3 were minor, accounting for just over a 10th acre, with the other being a significant preseason fire. 95% of fires were kept at 10 acres or less.



After average precipitation through the winter and early part of the spring, we saw the rain essentially turn off on April 25th and temps quickly start to trend warmer. May brought less than a half inch of rain and fuels quickly became receptive. On May 11th, we started to see our first escaped debris and non-permitted slash burns carry fire into adjacent fuels. Between May 11th and when fire season was declared on June 9th, the district had suppressed 12 fires for a total of 355 acres. 3 acres from escaped debris and slash burns and the remaining 352 acres as a result of the 7K fire.





The 7K fire was reported on Friday, May 26th at 12:57 pm. The fire started mid-slope in an active logging unit and was burning on steep ground in slash and felled timber. The temperature at the time was 82 degrees with a relative humidity of approximately 36%. Pushed by a west wind, the fire quickly moved upslope through the slash and overtook the yarder at the top of the landing where it then began spotting into the reprod on the eastern slope. Given the fire potential, reduced availability of resources due to pre-season holiday weekend, terrain, and fuel type the district began assembling a type 3 team early that afternoon. The fire was estimated to be 175-200 acres by midnight and pushing 300-acres the next morning. Moving into proceeding shifts, crews were aided by a more moderate weather pattern that fell over the area through the next week, which was highly welcomed as the district was very motivated to erase any potential from this fire off the landscape as we transitioned into fire season. The landowner was instrumental in supporting this effort.



The weather quickly moved back to a warm dry trend in the first week of June and the district felt it appropriate to declare fire season and put regulated use restrictions in place on Friday, June 9th. The seasonal fire crew started on Monday, June 19th and hit the ground running. Between the start of 7K on May 26th and July 2nd, the district suppressed 14 fires that burned a total of 7.9 acres. A robust training plan was organized to be implemented on the back end of fire school in early July, but those plans were changed as fires persisted and July 3rd brought our next significant fire.

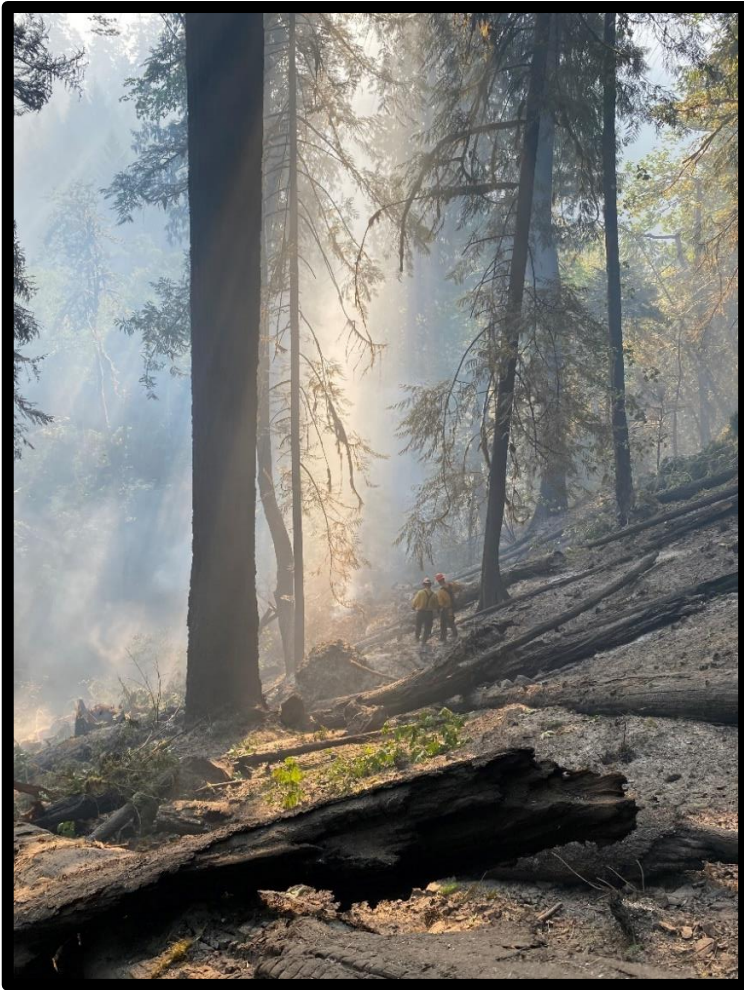
The Moon Mountain fire started on the evening of July 3rd, when the area was experiencing above average temperatures, critically low RH levels and an ERC that reached its peak for the season. Our crews had also been busy working other fires leading up to this, working the 5.5-acre Halderson Road fire the afternoon and evening of July 2nd and the 5.5-acre Bennett Creek fire which started at 4:00 am the morning of July 3rd.



Moon Mountain burned in a very high-profile location with potential to impact homes, Lane Community College, Interstate 5, large transmission lines, highly trafficked hiking trails, city water storage facility and an underground natural gas line. With the weather forecast and the afore-mentioned complexities, management decided to put together a type 3 team structure for day shift of July 4th. Even with minimal IA resources and significant nighttime fire behavior, firefighters were able to keep this fire in a good place until air resources and hand crews arrived the following morning. The total fire size was 35 acres.

Ramping down from Moon Mountain, the district continued to see a steady number of fire starts through the middle portion of July. Between July 4th and 18th, the district suppressed 13 fires that burned 18.5 acres. At approximately 5:45 pm on July 18th, the Haight Creek fire was reported by a watchman on a nearby unit just east of the fire's location. Reminiscent of the Moon Mountain fire scenario, the district had been actively fighting fire on that day, having fought the 6.5-acre Gimpl Road fire and the 6-acre 30th Avenue fire that afternoon. At the time the fire started, temperatures were in the mid to high 80's and the relative humidity had dropped to 15%. The fire's origin was directly off Oxbow Access Road in an area where people frequently camp.

Although the early detection from the watchman allowed for a quick response, the fire quickly became established in a large stand of BLM old growth and thick understory.



As the fire progressed up the steep slope to the south, crews were hampered by a large number of falling trees and rollers and it became clear that the ground and air resources on scene were not going to check the fire that evening. So the decision to order another type 3 team was made. The following day, a large contingent of air resources, including SEATs, helicopters, large air tankers and scoopers were deployed, as crews were still only minimally effective on the flanks as falling trees continued to pose significant risk. Fortunately, the fire was flanked by roads to the east and west and the intensive effort of the aviation resources on the head of the fire kept it from growing beyond 110 acres. Given the conditions and the alignment of slash and young stand units just beyond the head, it's amazing that this fire was not the next type one team deployment.



Between July 18th and August 25th, the district suppressed 23 fires that burned 4.3 acres, as conditions were at or above the historical average with the exception of a heat dome that sat over the area from August 13th through the 17th. The district was fortunate to suppress and keep small the few fires we had during this spike.

On August 25th, the first of two thunderstorms passed over the district, producing approximately 50 positive strikes. Detection and initial attack efforts started just after midnight with the aid of our rural counterparts and the landowner/operator community. This early effort gave us good situational awareness and allowed us time to have a good plan in place by daybreak. Ultimately, the storm produced 11 fires burning a total of 8 acres, most of which were under one acre, with the largest being 5 acres. This storm also produced the 110-acre Three Buttes fire, which was burning on the Siuslaw National Forest within 600 ft of ODF protected ground. The district sent crews who had been mopping up our larger lightning fires and provided support in the form of a type 2 helicopter and a number of overhead to aid the effort. The second storm passed over the district a week later on September 2nd, producing the same amount of lightning. Fortunately, this storm came with a half inch of rain and only produced 1 fire, burning less than a quarter of an acre.

Another shot of rain came over the district in late September that we were hoping would end the season, but things dried back out and fire season was ultimately called on October 10th.

Although challenging, the 2023 fire season brought opportunities for staff to build new skill sets and grow as a team. Many thanks to all the ODF and association districts that supported us in our firefighting efforts and to all the Western Lane staff from other programs. All were key to our success in 2023.

Staff Opportunities and Movement:

- **Matt Grimes**- Canada assignment as a TFLD, from 05/07-05/25
- **Bjorn Smars**- FO- Developmental WFS, starting on 06/19
- **Kyle Tripp**- Permanent FO – Developmental Wildland Fire Supervisor, starting 10/06
- **Matt Grimes**- Permanent FO – Developmental Stewardship Forester, starting 10/16
- **Chris Romero**- FMT - Developmental Forest Officer, Started 6/19
- **Sean Hood**- WFSS – Developmental FO from 6/19 – 10/10
- **McKenna Armantrout, Chris Romero, Seth Griffith**- Kentucky assignment as Crew from 11/08-11/23



Seth, McKenna & Chris in Kentucky



Kentucky Leaves

SMOKE MANAGEMENT

2023 Smoke Management Units		2023 Smoke Management Acres		2023 Smoke Management Tons	
Units Registered	194	Acres Registered	8,539	Tons Registered	61,292
Units Planned	206	Acres Planned	9,529	Tons Planned	58,856
Units Burned	149	Acres Burned	5,462	Tons Burned	35,073

PREVENTION PROGRAM

Western Lane’s Fire Prevention program maintained the status quo in 2023. We participated in several events that we have been part of year after year, including the Logging Conference, Veneta National Night Out, and Veneta Elementary Earth Day events among many others.

The Lane County Fire Prevention Co-Op continued going strong, meeting once a month. This year the co-op sponsored a table at the Bohemia Mining Days in July and put their 1931 Chevrolet Fire Engine in the Veneta Light Parade on December 7th, driven by Brian Johnson with Smokey in the passenger seat.



Eric Brekstad at the Oregon Logging Conference



Lane County Fire Prevention Co-Op 1931 Chevrolet Fire Engine

For the second year in a row, Keep Oregon Green had grant money available for ODF Districts and Associations to fund prevention efforts. Western Lane submitted a proposal titled “Preventing Wildfire One Frame at a Time” and was fortunate enough to be awarded \$9,343 to purchase a hybrid DSLR Nikon Z 6II Camera and associated equipment, including lenses and a gimbal. This equipment was purchased with the intent to produce higher quality media, photos, and videos for prevention efforts on social media, in handouts, and display items.



June 27 Industrial Inspection with Fire Warden Chris Romero. Photo taken with the Nikon Z 6II

Prevention efforts also included IRA fire suppression trainings for operators and contractors, held in April and May this year for a total of 5 training sessions. Western Lane also participated in National Wildfire Awareness Month by passing out over 25,000 coffee sleeves with prevention messages to local coffee carts in western Lane County.



Aaron Lighty conducts the April 21st IRA training

The ODF Western Lane Facebook page was very helpful this year, as we had a very busy fire season. In addition to keeping the public informed on fire season, Regulated Use, and IFPL information, we were able to use this platform to keep the public up to date with the larger fires we had this summer, including the 7K, Moon Mountain, and Haight Creek fires. Our Facebook page gained 2431 followers in 2023, for a total of 6708 followers. We started the page in February of 2017.

2023 Fire Prevention Activities for Western Lane District:

- 85th Annual Logging Conference - February 23-25
- Lane County Spring Home and Garden Show - March 10
- Veneta Elementary Earth Day - April 20
- Forests Today & Forever Outdoor School - April
- Handed out 25,000 prevention coffee sleeves - May
- Pre-season equipment checks with tree service companies, ODOT, and utility companies – May & June
- National Night out in Veneta – August 1
- Bohemia Mining Days July 13
- Lane County Fair – July 19-23
- Junction City First Responders Community Picnic – September 14
- Road brushing
- Participated in prescribed burns with other agencies



February 23rd- Kate Johns & McKenna Armantrout at the logging conference

WESTERN LANE FOREST RESOURCES

2023 was a historic year with the implementation of the Private Forest Accord and the introduction of major changes to the Forest Practice rules in Oregon. Mediated negotiations between the timber and conservation communities resulted in the Private Forests Accord Report. This unique agreement was presented to the Oregon Legislature, Governor Kate Brown, and the Oregon Board of Forestry on February 2nd, 2022, which resulted in House and Senate bills passing with overwhelming support. The goal is to increase regulatory and conservation certainty through modified Forest Practice Act rules and an associated Habitat Conservation Plan and Incidental Take Permit. Some of the major components of the new rules included increased stream buffers, requirements to inventory and maintain forest roads to new standards, increased tree retention on steep slopes, and the introduction of the Small Landowner Assistance office. Stream buffer rules went into effect for large landowners on July 1st and all other rules became effective on January 1st, 2024.

With massive amounts of new information to digest, Stewardship Foresters had their work cut out for them to maintain the level of service that is expected from our landowner base and to study and train in the new rules. Not yet sure how the agency was going to roll out the training element of the PFA, the district decided to utilize the information we already had and dive into some internal training to get a head start. This was done by each forester taking one major component of the rule change, familiarizing themselves with it, and then presenting their interpretation of it to the other Forest Resources staff. This was beneficial in setting a base level understanding for our staff before the more in-depth training ramped up. Agency trainings soon followed with in-class and field training for each major rule component and two geographical specific weeklong module trainings.

2022 Notification Totals				2023 Notification Totals			
	Veneta	Coos	Total		Veneta	Coos	Total
NOAPS	1097	1484	2581	NOAPS	1066	1255	2321
2021 Conts.	250	378	628	2022 Conts.	375	564	939
FPA Insp.	231	527	758	FPA Insp.	211	303	514
Written Plans	339	579	918	Written Plans	354	564	918



ODF Kiosk at the 2023 Oregon Logging Conference

Veneta Unit Forest Resources

Our staff played a part in the roll out of the new rules. Nick Haile took part in the PFA development group, helping write the new reporting requirements for activity completion in FERNs, and helping write the updated enforcement section of division 670 and 672, which he then presented to the Board of Forestry. He also served on the field training partners' group, helping develop training material for Module A & B. All other Veneta Stewardship Foresters were part of the train the trainer group, helping bring a field perspective to the agency training coordinators.



Railroad Creek culvert placement project

As our staff became more comfortable with the new content, they conducted several meetings in the field with landowners doing on-site rule interpretations to help talk through how the new concepts would play out.



Starting up the SFO office meant establishing new district procedures in delegating notifications of operation and adding capacity. Ian Goodwin was hired on September 4th to carry forward the work of providing service to landowners who own less than 5,000 acres with harvest levels below 2 million board feet. Ian is a recent graduate from Oregon State where he received an undergraduate degree in Forest Management/Fire Restoration and a master's degree in Forest Policy and Economics. Ian has a background in fire and has worked with ODF in the Forest Grove district as an NRS-1 Roads Specialist. Ian hit the ground running, engaging in the community and building a strong standard for the SFO program to grow from.

While our stewardship Foresters were busy prepping for the new era, they were also instrumental in the district's firefighting efforts in 2023. Each held overhead positions on all our larger fires and are of great benefit to help manage fires and allow our fire staff to be nimbler in initial attack efforts. A huge thanks for their support!

By comparison, Veneta Unit numbers for 2023 were at or near average with Stewardship Foresters receiving 1,066 notifications and 375 continuations from 2022. Staff reviewed 354 written plans and conducted 211 FPA inspections.

We were pleased to welcome back the operator dinner in 2023. Teaming up with the South Cascade district, we put on an evening presentation where operators could take their annual fire shelter training and hear from guest speakers on various forestry and fire topics. This year Western Lane Forest Resources staff gave an overview presentation on industrial requirements, fire inspections, and waivers. The district also reengaged at the 2023 logging conference and coordinated the presence of several ODF programs to join in. Western Lane staffed tables for Forest Resources, Fire Prevention/Protection, State Forests, Fuels Reduction/Grants, and brought Smokey by for a visit. Salem provided volunteers to staff the Insect and Disease and Wildlife Biology table. As always there was a huge turnout, and many good conversations were had.



John Deegan presents Brian Peterson with his 25-year service award

Staff Opportunities and Movement:

- **Tim Moss:** 4/3/23- Took a position in Salem as a Forest Resources Field Coordinator
- **Eric Brekstad:** 7/10/23- Moved from WFS position and was hired as Stewardship Forester in the Florence Unit
- **Nick Haile:** 6/26/23- Took position in Roseburg as an SOA Forest Resources Manager
- **Matt Grimes:** 10/10/23 – 10/7/24- Developmental as Stewardship Forester behind Haile

Coos Unit Forest Resources

The Coos Unit (Coos Bay Unit office and Brookings sub-unit office) administers the Forest Resources Program on 1.38 million acres in Coos, Curry and western Douglas counties, including administration of Oregon's Forest Practices Act (FPA), providing assistance to family forest landowners, and treatment of the pathogen which causes Sudden Oak Death (SOD). The purpose of the FPA is to promote forest practices that are consistent with sound management and protection of trees, soil, air, water, and fish and wildlife resources while assuring the continuous growing and harvesting of forest tree species. Stewardship Foresters place priorities on environmentally sensitive forest harvest operations, conducting pre-operation, active, and post-operation visits, reviewing written plans and assisting forest landowners and operators of all sizes. The purpose of the SOD program is to limit the speed and spread of Sudden Oak Death.

New rules brought with it additional capacity by way of a Small Forestland Owner (SFO) Stewardship Forester hired mid-year to help spread the word of new rules and options for landowners with limited acreage and harvest.



Stewardship Foresters Quinn Allen and Donnie Widener (not pictured) attending the Southwestern Oregon Community College Career Day

Forest Resource Staff participated on several committees and workgroups across the agency, bringing valued experience and varied backgrounds. These groups include the FERNS workgroup, new rule training, and the Vision for Oregon's Forests (formerly Forest Plan for Oregon).

Coos Unit employees spent 31 days in district and 36 days off district in fire suppression roles across Oregon.

Personnel

Quinn Allen promoted from a Sudden Oak Death forester to Stewardship Forester in May.

Jacob Bergstrom was hired as a Small Forestland Owner (SFO) Stewardship Forester in July.

Ethan Grennan was hired as a Sudden Oak Death NRS1 forester in August.

Jennifer Ward promoted to the Project Lead and Policy Coordinator in the Forest Resources Training group.

Casara Nichols promoted to Seed Orchard Manager at ODF's Schroeder Seed Orchard.

COOS/BROOKINGS SOD PROGRAM

Sudden Oak Death (SOD), caused by the non-native pathogen *phytophthora ramorum* kills highly susceptible tree species such as tanoak and California Black Oak. The pathogen was first discovered in Oregon in 2001 and has been spreading ever since. A European strain of SOD was discovered in Oregon forests in 2015. This strain has affected and killed Douglas-fir in other parts of the world. The North American 2 strain was found in the Port Orford area in April of 2021. Potential effects on Oregon's forest health, forest industry, and interstate or international trade are large concerns. The goal of the SOD program is to slow the spread of both the North American (NA1 & NA2) and European (EU1) strains. Treatments consist of herbicide treatment, cutting and burning the infected trees and nearby susceptible trees.



Infected trees just south of Gold Beach



Infected tree next to a house in Port Orford



Treatment Unit at Humbug



Tree was resampled which is why there are areas of brown tissue and areas with pink tissue.

In general, this year several sites were discovered. The disease seems to be intensifying near Lobster Creek upriver on the Rogue River from the town of Gold Beach. Most of the treatment work in 2023 was focused on a new site just south of Port Orford. It was found early in the year and survey work around it to determine distribution commenced immediately. The site was mainly located on State Parks property, as well as two private owners, and had a very heavy Tanoak component in the stand. The site at this point is over 200 acres and work has been ongoing since early summer. At this point in time over 40 acres is completed with another 120 acres in progress. Later in the year, several sites were discovered between this new site and the town of Port Orford. The program is in the process of securing landowner consent and work is anticipated to begin on these sites in Spring of 2024.

Over the course of 2023 there were 329 samples taken, which resulted in 124 new positives. The bulk of the new positives were either in the Port Orford area or in the vicinity of Lobster Creek near the Rogue River.



Infected Rhododendron near Port Orford



Treatment unit at Humbug Mt in process

We continue to work with Oregon State University on research projects and provide assistance on a continuing resistance study. In addition, we also continue to work with Norma Kline at OSU extension, focused on community outreach and education. One of the special projects the program worked on this year was the use of a Biochar kiln that was borrowed from the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. The process created bio char that is useful in gardening and was done as an alternative to open burning of piles.



A property in Port Orford treated with an excavator



The Biochar Kiln burning Tanoak

Brandi Anderson joined the SOD team for the summer as a part-time student worker. Brandi is attending Southwestern Oregon Community College and got some on the ground forestry experience doing stream baiting work in the Sudden Oak Death program.

Ethan Grennan was hired mid-year as an NRS1 to work on the program. He has taken on roles with contacting landowners and survey work. In addition, he has been working on contract administration with the contract crews that have been hired to do the treatments.



Biochar produced by the Kiln

ADMINISTRATION & DISPATCH

2023 was an extremely busy year for Western Lane Administrative staff, primarily due to a record fire season, being short one admin employee for much of our fire season and a change to our payroll application.

In April, we hired a new OS2, but that individual soon left, leaving a vacancy in our front office that we were not able to fill prior to fire season. The workload left by the exit of the OS2 was primarily picked up by our AS1, Dave Kjosness.



Lauren Fischer

Fire season for Western Lane began early, with our first Type 3 Fire (7K) igniting May 26th, the Friday before Memorial Day weekend. We were still reorganizing our dispatch center when this fire broke out and we did not have our seasonal dispatcher on board. Our seasonal dispatcher, Lauren Fischer, started her season on May 30th, right in the middle of the 7K Fire. The standard training schedule for Lauren was not possible and it was quite literally trial by fire for her. Just when it felt like we were getting a handle on payments for 7K, the next Type 3 Incident, Moon Mountain, ignited on July 3rd, followed closely by the third Type 3 Incident, Haight Creek. We received some outside help, but a good portion of the dispatch, ordering, and finance remained in the hands of our local admin employees for these incidents.

Our dispatch center used FireWeb as our dispatch CAD platform again in 2023. While we knew this platform made us more efficient in dispatching and reporting, we were really able to put it to the test in 2023. Our dispatch staff found a lot of value this year in new functions that were added, including pushing incidents directly from FireWeb into IRWIN and populating TARO's with all applicable information within FireWeb.

In late September, we hired Lauren Fischer to fill the vacant OS2 position. Lauren performed incredibly well as our seasonal dispatcher, and we are excited to have another permanent admin staff in place who has wildland fire dispatch experience.

Immediately following fire season, we were tasked with payroll audits and corrections. While this is a normal process following fire season, the workload was significantly amplified due to the new Workday Payroll application. At the end of 2023 we have already completed two iterations of audits and corrections, with at least two more to do in 2024. Countless hours have been spent to get our personnel expenditures as accurate as possible. The audit/correction process was not necessarily enjoyable, but our staff remained positive and were dedicated to completing the work within the timeframes given.

Three of our Admin Unit employees received service awards in 2023. Dave Kjosness, AS1, received his 10-year service award. Brandy Simmons, AS2, earned her 15-year service award and Andrea Lively, District Business Manager, earned her 25-year service award. We are grateful for the longevity and experience of our administrative staff.



Dave- 10 years



Brandy- 15 years



Andrea- 25 years



Dave

Brandy

Lauren

Andrea



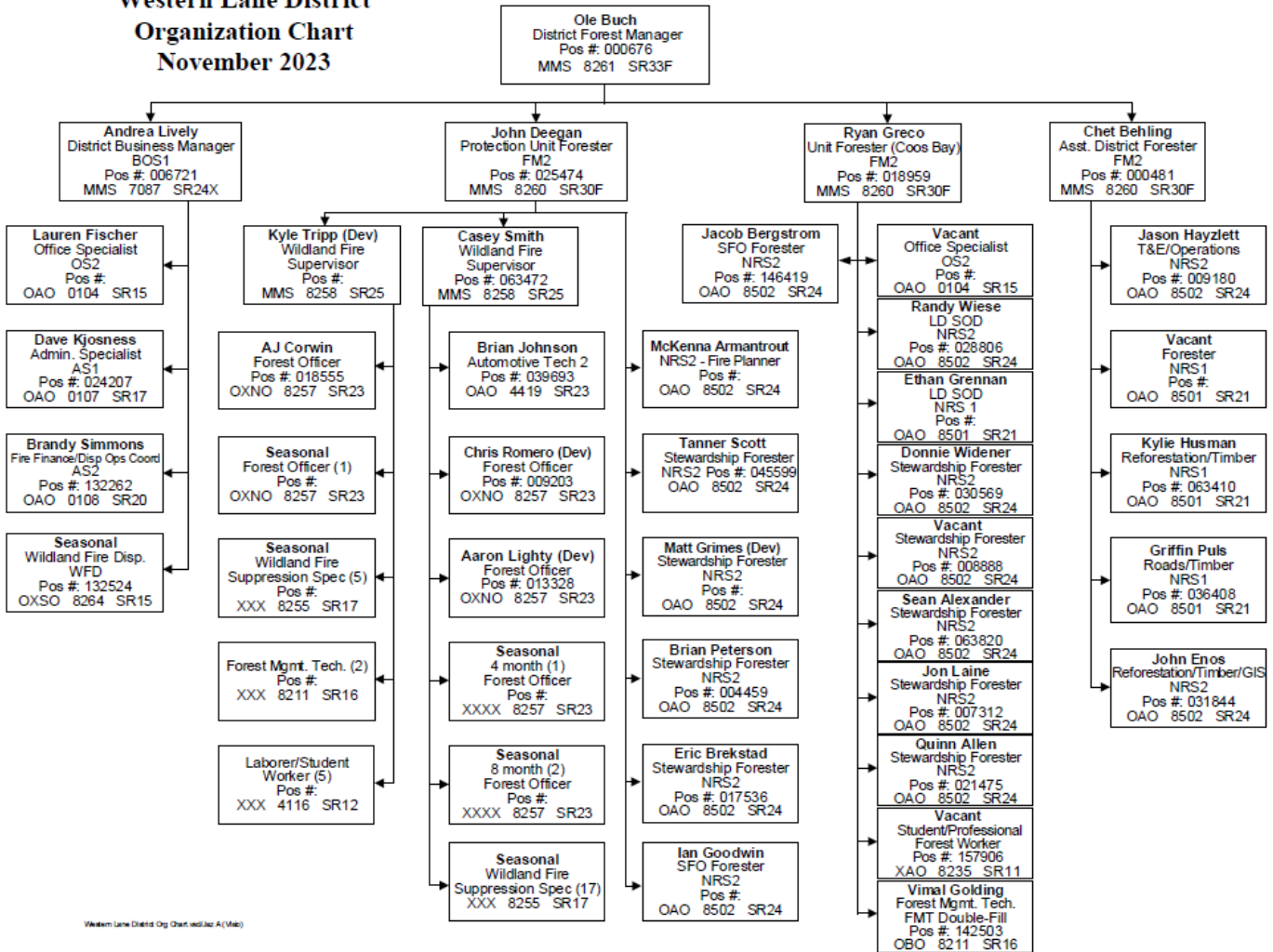
2023 Western Lane Staff



Just a portion of our amazing 2023 Fire Crew

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

Western Lane District Organization Chart November 2023



Western Lane District Org Chart ver 1.0 (MMS)

2023 WLFPA BOARD

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