

# Business & Ag

## County meets with Oregon Department of Forestry

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On Tuesday, the Baker County Board of Commissioners met with Northeast Oregon District Forester John Buckman, La Grande/Baker City Unit Forester Joe Hessel, and Baker City Fire Protection Supervisor Steve Meyer, all of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), for a government-to-government, informational coordination meeting.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Tim Kerns, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin.

Also in attendance were Baker County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) Coordinator Eric Wuntz, NRAC Chair Doni Bruland, Craig Bruland, Wanda Ballard, Art and Suzette Sappington, and Cynthia Long.

Buckman introduced himself, and Hessel and Meyer, seated in that order to his right, then he began a PowerPoint presentation, using the County's interactive Smart Board, to give attendees an overview of ODF structure and activity.

He displayed, using an area map, the forest district boundaries, a total area of about 290,000 acres of private land for which the ODF provides fire protection in Baker County. Next, he explained the three primary ODF programs in the Northeast Oregon District:

- 1) To provide fire protection on private and non-federal public lands (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, or ODFW, parks, etc.).
- 2) To administer the Oregon Forest Practices Act.
- 3) To assist landowners by providing technical forestry assistance and by seeking out and administering cost-share grants.

"Northeast Oregon has fire protection responsibilities in seven counties. There are four primary counties; Wallowa, Union, Umatilla, and Baker. We have a little bit in Malheur, a little bit in Grant, a little bit in Morrow. We have 25 permanent staff. Most of those are associated with the fire protection program. Three of the permanent staff are in Baker County. We hired about 50 seasonal firefighters, and nine of those are in Baker County. We staff up to four engines, during the peak of the season, in Baker County. Again, because of that intermix of (land) ownership, there's a whole lot of cooperation that occurs," Buckman said, noting that ODF shares an interagency dispatch center in Northeast Oregon, and ODF works closely with federal agencies, counties, rural fire departments, and rangeland fire protection districts.

Buckman said that ODF provides fire protection for 1.9 million acres in seven northeast Oregon counties, which includes the 290,000 acres in Baker County, and an annual forest patrol assessment of \$1.45 per acre for timber, and \$.38 per acre for grazing, was paid in 2014 by landowners.

"There's no getting around it," he said, stating



L-R: John Buckman, Joe Hessel, Steve Meyer, Mark Bennett, Bill Harvey, and Tim Kerns.

that fire protection isn't cheap, and that the assessment fees account for about 45% of the total cost for the protection program, the remainder coming from matching State funding.

He said that, on average, the District experiences about 82 wildfires a year, resulting in an average loss of about 2,300 acres per year. When asked by Harvey about the loss this year, Buckman said that about half of it was grazing land.

Buckman said statewide, ODF has about 700 FTE (full-time equivalent) employees, three incident management teams, and about 20 aircraft for firefighting. He discussed the statewide funding structure, including: base funding of \$48 million in 12 Districts, with about \$4.4 million of that for the Northeast Oregon District; severity funding of \$5 million; a shared annual premium of \$3.6, by landowners and grant funding; a shared insurance deductible of \$50 million--\$30 million by the State, and \$20 million by grant funding and landowners; and \$76 million spent on large fires last year, with a net cost of \$30 million (about \$8 million of that in Northeast Oregon), after including funding support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Buckman spoke about the Oregon Forest Practices Act, a set of standards related to forest management activities, and he explained that, through the best management possible, and interaction with landowners and others, enforcement of the Act is minimized. He said typically in the District, there might be one citation on average issued per year for violations.

During a discussion about riparian damage, salvage timber processes, and rule flexibility, Hessel said, "There haven't been too many hiccups locally, on those issues...In working with landowners and their objectives, across their whole ownership, I think we encourage active management across all their landscape, including those riparian areas, and, so, whether it's commercial thinning, or commercial harvest, there is an ability to get in there and manage it...There are pretty good avenues to get in and do that, and, we encourage that...The intent is to have a healthy forest..."

Buckman discussed the forest landowner assis-

tance program, and he said that 12,000 acres of over-stocked forest stands have been treated in Baker County since 2002, via \$3.5 million in fuels reduction grants. He said ODF's a key player in the Northeast Oregon Cohesive Wildfire Strategy pilot project, and major accomplishments on the East Face project include 2,020 acres of completed thinning on private land, with another 2,150 acres left. He also noted that one of ODF's goals is to assist ODFW in forest management

In response to a question from Bennett about working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Hessel explained the development of a partnership between ODF and NRCS over the last eight to 10 years, with NRCS primarily providing funding for forest management projects, and he said, "It's benefited the landowners in Baker County tremendously...They're a really good partner..."

Buckman said, "That relationship is just wonderful, and, a lot of that came out of Baker County... We told the executives, 'You show us the money, we'll make you look good.'"

Harvey discussed the East Face project, explaining Wuntz's associated efforts, and Buckman and Hessel echoed Harvey's thoughts that Wuntz has been, and will continue to be, a valuable asset with that endeavor.

Speaking about partnerships and working with ODF and others, Harvey said, "I'm kind of actually excited about the opportunity to do that, because, I'm liking what you guys do. I mean, you just start, and run, and you get things going, and, I'd love to transition from fire fighting to fire protection, so that we're all saving things..."

Buckman and Harvey both mentioned they think the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) employs some good foresters in the area, but, unfortunately, regulations, which they are required to follow, seem to often times cause major roadblocks.

Harvey emphasized the interagency cooperation with fighting fires this season, and, he applauded the ODF and others for their efforts.

He said, "We had great responders, we had cats, we had everything going. A lot of people didn't see that. We did... You guys were updating us, and keeping everything going, and, it was great to see

that. I want to emphasize that to the public, and the press, and say, 'We are catching fires...' What you guys did was basically awesome..."

Buckman used the phrase, "moving the needle," to describe the way the ODF seeks methods for continuous improvement.

Hessel said, speaking about post-fire salvage, "I checked with Logan (Ross, Habitat Conservationist for the Baker County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, SWCD) yesterday, and, I think, for private landowners to conduct some form of forest management on their property, especially if it's commercial harvest, there's a process they go through to notify ODF, of their activity." He said there are around 29 notifications for fire salvage projects, eight of those from Hancock Forest Management, with around 8,000 acres burned by wildfire. The remaining 20 notifications are non-industrial, private lands, he said, from around 20 different landowners, looking to complete salvage projects.

Hessel said that reforestation is probably the biggest issue, considering the future. He said ODF is trying to speed up the seedlings collection and planting effort, via a seedling clearing house, dubbed the Private Lands Forest Network, based out of La Grande. He said it's probably going to be a two to 10-year project to get most of the replanting completed in northeast Oregon. The seedlings may cost around \$1 each, all costs considered, he said, and, around June or July next year, the process may begin.

Kerns encouraged the ODF to implement more aircraft statewide, explaining the value of that resource, and, Hessel said there are about 20 aircraft available, and, he'll work to acquire more for fire-fighting use.

"I was impressed," Kerns said, about the pilots and swiftness of the aerial attack on the wildfires. Harvey said it's a good idea to have a mix, both airplanes and helicopters, and, he was also impressed with the abilities of the pilots.

Bennett mentioned that he appreciated the consideration given to landowners, and, he wishes to see the continued firefighting training of National Guardsmen, and, possibly some inmate crews.

### — WEEKLY HAY REPORT —

Friday, November 20, 2015 — Eastern Oregon

Prices trended generally steady compared to week-ago prices. The upcoming holidays have slowed sales. Many producers have decided to hold on to their hay for now, in hopes for higher prices. Snow has hit some of the hay producing areas.

Tons	Price Range	Wtd Avg
Alfalfa — Small Square, God	100 190.00-190.00	190.00

#### Last week:

Alfalfa — Large Square, Fair	200 130.00-130.00	130.00
Alfalfa / Orchard Mix — Small Square, Premium	50 215.00-215.00	215.00
Alfalfa / Orchard Mix — Small Square, Premium	40 200.00-200.00	200.00

USDA Market News Service—AMS.USDA.gov

### — CATTLE MARKET REPORT —

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

Vale, Oregon

Cattle sold through the auction: 1,785

#### Steer Calves

300-400#	Bulk 231.00 - 261.00	Top 275.00
400-500#	Bulk 187.00 - 243.00	Top 249.00
500-600#	Bulk 174.00 - 199.00	Top 209.00

#### Heifer Calves

300-400#	Bulk 187.00 - 201.00	Top 203.00
400-500#	Bulk 163.00 - 211.00	Top 213.00
500-600#	Bulk 157.00 - 178.00	Top 182.00

#### Yearling Steers

600-700#	Bulk 161.00 - 182.00	Top 183.50
700-800#	Bulk 143.00 - 164.00	Top 165.00
800-900#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A
900-1,000#	Bulk 144.00 - 150.00	Top 151.00

#### Yearling Heifers

600-700#	Bulk 142.00 - 163.00	Top 164.00
700-800#	Bulk 135.00 - 148.00	Top 149.00
800-900#	Bulk N/A	Top N/A
900-1,000#	Bulk 121.00 - 128.00	Top 131.00

Thin Shelly Cows	51.00 - 62.00
Butcher Cows	63.00 - 69.00
Butcher Bulls	66.00 - 83.00
Stock Cows Yng.	1385.00 - 1700.00
Younger Hfrts.	94.00 - 127.00
Stock Cows Older.	975.00 - 1285.00

ProducersLivestock.com  
541-473-3136

### — LOG PRICE REPORT —

Price per 1,000 board feet: Northeast Oregon

Doug Fir	\$415.00/mbf
White fir	\$365.00/mbf
Ponderosa Pine	is brought sold on diameter splits
6 to 11 inch dib	\$300 to \$310/MBF
12 to 17 inch dib	\$350 to \$375/MBF
18 to 23 inch dib	\$400 to \$430/MBF
24 inch plus dib	\$450 to \$500/MBF

DIB is diameter inside bark at small end of log.  
MBF is thousand board feet lumber, net scale.  
People interested in selling logs should call and get specific quotes from saw mills.

Courtesy of Arvid Andersen,  
Andersen Forestry Consulting

### — PRECIOUS METALS REPORT —

Price per ounce, USD

Gold: \$1,067.10

Silver: \$14.08

Platinum: \$845.73

Palladium: \$538.55

Bloomberg.com

### — AG COMMODITIES —

Corn	\$372.75/bu/USD
Wheat	\$497.25/bu/USD
Soybeans	\$864.50/bu/USD
Oats	\$227.50 bu/USD
Rough Rice	\$12.13/cwt/USD
Canola	\$460.90 CAD/mwt
Live Cattle	\$133.55/lb./USD
Feeder Cattle	\$164.75/lb./USD
Lean Hogs	\$58.15/lb./USD

Bloomberg.com