

Forest Service says drought problems minimal ... so far

By Marlene Clark

According to Carson Hall, U.S. Forest Service forestry technician in charge of reforestation or tree planting in Estacada, the drought has not caused any problems so far this year.

However, the drought could have an effect this summer if rain doesn't come in the spring. But right now there is plenty of moisture in the soil on the west side of the Cascades, said Hall.

Benny Parmele, fuel manager, said the drought was not affecting the forests now but could hit in June or July. According to Parmele if it does stay dry, he can't burn the slash or logging wastes because of fire danger. Before an area is replanted the slash is burned. If an area is burned in spring then it is planted in the fall. Slash burning is a form of fire prevention, said Parmele.

"People can't work in the woods if there is a drought because it will be too dry and a fire danger. We have 11 inches less rainfall than last year," said Parmele. "There is no fire danger yet, but there could be in July or August."

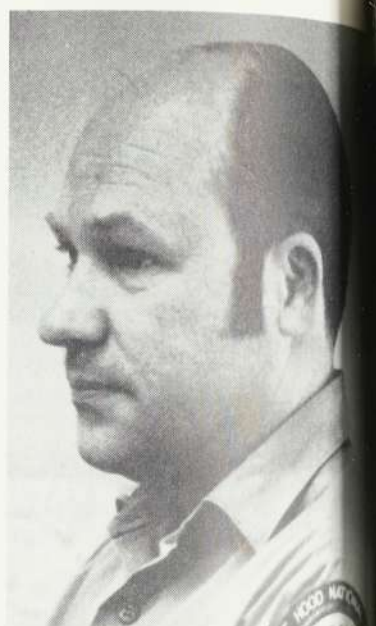
Observer aircrafts are used to help spot fires, as there are only a few watch towers in the area, and they are usually used only during hazardous fire times.

When a fire does break out, the Fire Service Crew is called to fight the fire. The crew is specially-trained. Loggers assist by running their large equipment and the cats.

The drought may also affect recreation. If it becomes too dry the back campgrounds will be shut off and possibly others, depending on how dry it is.

The days are lettered A through E. These letters are a fire danger code. A is a good day, C means power equipment goes off at 1 p.m. and on an E day, there is no work.

Ninety per cent of the fires are man-made by carelessness, campfires and smokers. The few fires started by loggers are the most expensive because they destroy the forest and profits. "They tend to get big," said Hall.



Bruce Reed
...recreation assistant

Reforestation started this year around March 1 and will end in June, said Hall. The planting of new trees is done in areas that have been clear cut and the crew follows the melting snow line up the mountainside.

Clear cutting is when everything goes, said Hall. The old growth timber is harvested. Old growth are trees which are between 200 and 500 years old.

Bruce Reed, recreation assistant, manages campgrounds and trails in the Estacada area. Some of the recreation offered are fishing, rafting, hunting, backpacking and horseback riding.

Reed said that they use a pack string to clear the back trails because it's easier than a car or truck. Besides repairing trails they fix the signs and cut down timber and berry vines.

According to Reed there is no wild animal problem and most snakes in the area are non-poisonous. However, there are some scorpions, but they are rare, he said.



Benny Parmele
...forest service fuel manager

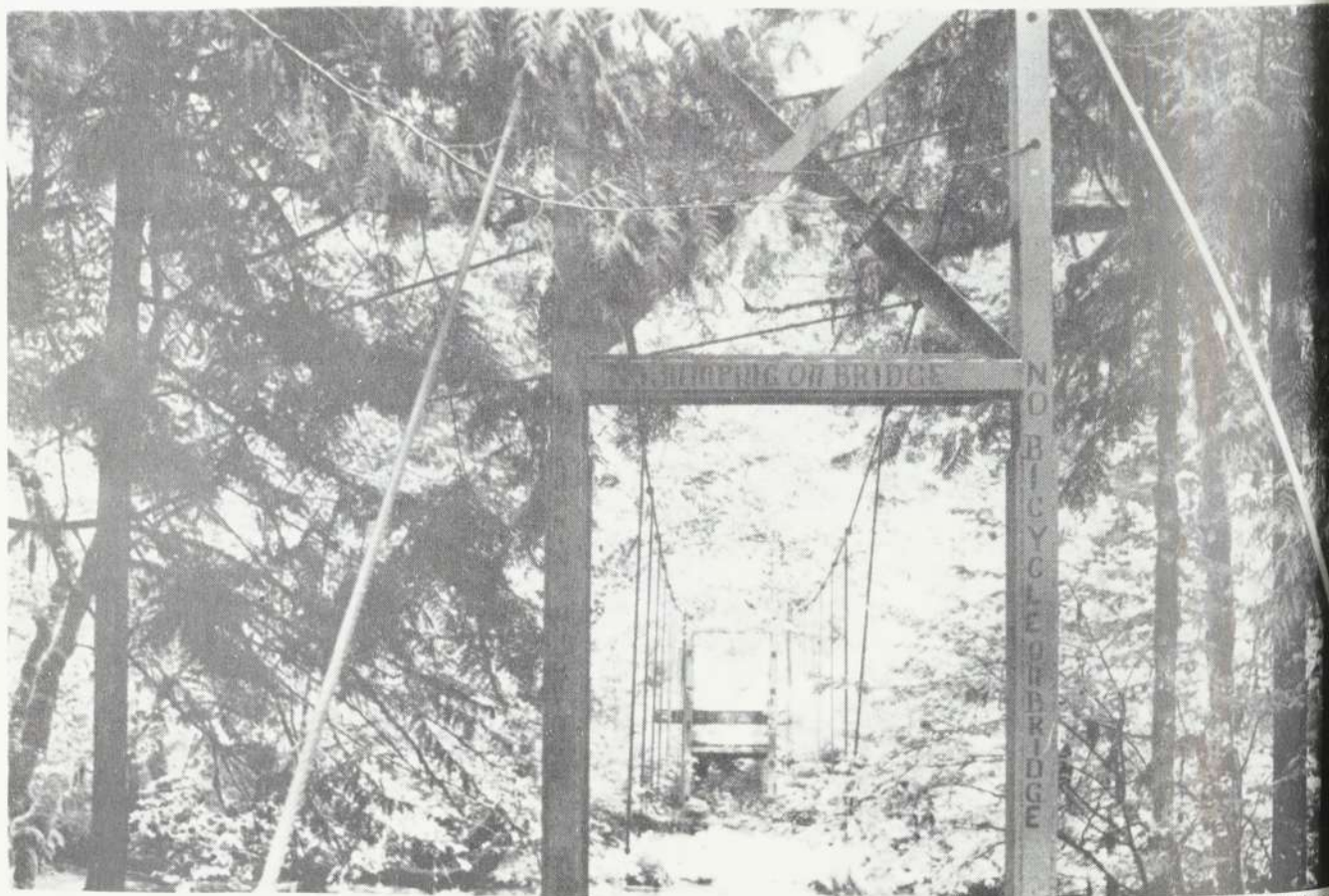


Photo by Joy Williams

