

# Slow fire season crawls to a halt

(AP) - Despite dire predictions, 2004 was one of Oregon's slowest fire seasons in years, coming to a halt in a humiliating dose of liquid sunshine.

Forest fires burned only about 10 percent of the 10-year average and less than one-fifth of last year's acreage. Many crews didn't have much to do, and spent their time clearing roads and doing maintenance on shelters.

"It's disappointing," said Jason Dodge, 21, of Oakridge. "I like the excitement, the action. I do this job for the thrill."

Saturday was the final day for his 20-person crew at the Middle Fork Ranger District in the Willamette National Forest.

"They're young, they enjoy getting out and doing something physical," crew boss Joe Mercado said. "But I think they prefer a big fire season. They get to make some pretty good money."

This summer, only a few small, lightning-sparked fires involved local crews.

The largest burned 13,540 acres, a modest-sized fire in other years.

Other fires were kept small by rain, rapid initial attacks and well-placed firefighting aircrafts.

Suppression costs for the big fires were about \$16 million this year compared to more than \$89 million last year.

Mark Hager, an assistant engine captain stationed on the Middle Fork district, said this was the slowest fire season he's seen in 15 or 20 years.

Pat Houghton, assistant intelligence coordinator in the Portland center that orchestrates wildland firefighting efforts in Oregon and Washington, said the toll was light on timber and wildlife, few structures burned and no casualties were reported.

"Nobody got hurt, nobody got killed - that's always a great season," Houghton said.

It was a mixed blessing for some firefighters. Many are students and the extra cash from a busy fire season can make or break a year.

On a fire, a crew member can make \$300 for a 16-hour day in hot, dangerous conditions.

Ashley Coey, 18, one of two women on the crew, had hoped to earn more as she heads to Eastern Oregon University in La Grande to study nursing.

"The rain sort of interfered with that," said Coey, also of Oakridge.

This year her crew was called up for fires near Warm Springs and in California and Nevada.

That was more action than many private contract crews saw this year.

Eugene-based Skookum Reforestation Inc. had five idle crews waiting for calls that never came, owner Scott Coleman said.

"We're hemorrhaging," Coleman said. "It was a disaster. They hardly got out at all."

There are 269 such crews in Oregon and competition is fierce even in busy years.

A few crews worked in Washington, which had a normal fire season.

Oregon had prepared for the worst, adding four heavy air tankers and seven helicopters to strategic locations to bolster initial attacks.

Dodge said he will resume studying computer network operations at Lane Community College this fall.

But next summer he hopes to be back on the Oakridge fire crew.

"I just love being out here," he said. "Being out here in the woods, you can't beat it. It's excellent."

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# Some advice on safe debris burning

By Suzi Macy

Fire Management

Fall clean up time has arrived and many folks this time of year burn debris that has accumulated around the outside of their home.

If you plan on burning any debris please make sure you have a valid burn permit and take the following precautions: Clear the ground of all flammable materials for at least 10 feet. Have adequate water and fire tools available in case the fire escapes.

Burn only during those hours specified on your burn permit. Don't burn on dry windy days and never leave the

fire unattended.

You may want to consider other alternatives to burning. Some types of debris, such as leaves and grass may be of more value if not burned and may be more useful as compost.

Never burn tires. Instead, haul them to the dump. Plastics i.e. plastic milk cartons, juice containers etc. can be recycled or taken to the landfill. Disposable diapers pose another problem. Please do not burn them. Take these to the landfill as well. When you burn plastics they release toxic and hazardous fumes. If you plan on using a burn barrel use a metal barrel in good condi-

tion and maintain at least 10 feet around the barrel that is free of all material that could cause your fire to escape. Place it in a cleared area away from overhead branches.

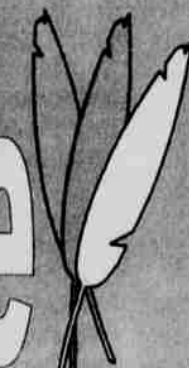
Have a heavy gauge mesh screen for the top of the barrel. The screen should be at least 14-gauge wire with holes not larger than 1/4 inch and never leave your fire unattended.

If you must burn debris do it safely.

If you have any questions regarding debris burning please contact Fire Management at 553 1146. Enjoy your time outdoors and stay safe.

**2004**

**Native Vote**



# Fall is the time to plant bulbs

Edith McBean and Tina Burnside  
OSU Master Gardener

Driving into Warm Springs I have seen nature's changes. Fall is officially here. The fields have been harvested. The aspens and maples are turning from green to bright yellows and reds. Hay for sale signs are showing up along Highway 97 with phone numbers to call.

Winter wheat has been planted, and the sprouts are gently pushing up through the soil. It's a wonderful time of the year to sit in the warmth of the afternoon sun.

I like watching spiders spin their webs, and seeing frantic squirrels gather nuts and cones, stashing them away for colder, less abundant days.

I personally have taken the hint, and I have begun to clean up my garden beds of their summer debris. It's been wonderful to watch the asters pop up with that last splash of color in the yard before fall fades into winter.

It's the time of year to plant your bulbs for spring. I know, it just doesn't seem right to be planning that far ahead. But when you see that crown of yellow grace your yard in March, you will be grateful for the little amount of effort you had to put in during the fall.

Recently, I purchased some beautiful daffodil and hyacinth bulbs to plant along my boarders. Their Latin names are narcissus and muscari.

These bulbs are composed of a thin, flattened stem surrounded by fleshy, dried leaf bases called scales. If you want a closer look, slice up an onion and look at the layers. It's interesting to see the layers so perfectly formed.

Usually you can get planting information from your packets of bulbs, but here are some general important reminders. Plant the bulbs between September and the first real hard frost, choosing a site that is well-drained. Loosen the soil and add a slow release fertilizer, mixing it with the soil. Slow release fertilizers or general 5-10-10 formulations work well for fall-planted bulbs.

Do not place bulbs directly on the fertilizer. Don't plant bulbs and tubers in dry soil; roots cannot begin to grow without moisture.

If the soil is very dry during fall planting, dig a hole for the bulbs, fill it with water, and allow it to drain before planting.

Planting depth depends on soil conditions. Many growers suggest planting about three times the depth of the bulb.

Shallow-planted bulbs may frost-heave and are easily dug up by those pesky rodents mentioned earlier.

West of the Cascades, fall rains would provide enough moisture for the spring-blooming bulbs, but in our dry climate, supplemental watering will encourage root growth. The roots will continue to grow slowly through the winter.

Usually you plant the bulbs the same distance apart as you have planted them deep with the pointed end up. Cover bulbs with soil and add mulch. You can use two to four inches of composted leaves, shredded fir bark, or composted sawdust.

Keep mulches open and light enough to allow shoots to emerge.

You will want to fertilize again with the same fertilizer 5-10-10 when they are about an inch tall.

Then behold the beauty of spring. To encourage flowering again the following year, allow the foliage to wither and turn yellow naturally as the bulbs go dormant.

Leave the bulbs undisturbed through the summer and apply fertilizer again in the fall.

There, I think you have it. Enjoy the remainder of your fall, knowing that spring will greet you with all of her glory.

Happy planting.

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# Gathering scheduled for Oct. 8 will celebrate ancient rock art

Elders will gather on Friday, Oct. 8 at Horsethief Start Park near The Dalles and Celilo area.

The gathering will be a celebration of the rock art that has been located at the park.

There will be transportation available for elders leaving Warm Springs. For information call the Senior Department at 553-3313.

Rock art in the Celilo area was removed by the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers before the flooding that occurred after The Dalles dam was built.

The art was stored away until recently, when it was placed at Horsethief Park, Wash.

Bonneville Power and the Army Corps of Engineers sponsored the project, while main contributors have been from the treaty tribes of the Columbia River.

The Oct. 8 celebration will begin at 10 a.m. with lunch served at noon.