

## Fire prevention, rehabilitation work done in timber areas



Section of forest that has not been thinned.



Trees that have been thinned. Grass has been reseeded begins to provide ground cover.

By Dan Thorpe

Much of Eastern Oregon was in the news daily during the severe fire season this past summer. During the month of August, the State Forestry Department was involved in suppression of approximately 137 fires totaling 48,777 acres generally concentrated in the northeast corner of the state.

Much work has already been completed in rehabilitating the burned area. Although the scars will last many years, the effects of erosion will hopefully be minimized through extensive grass seeding and waterbarring.

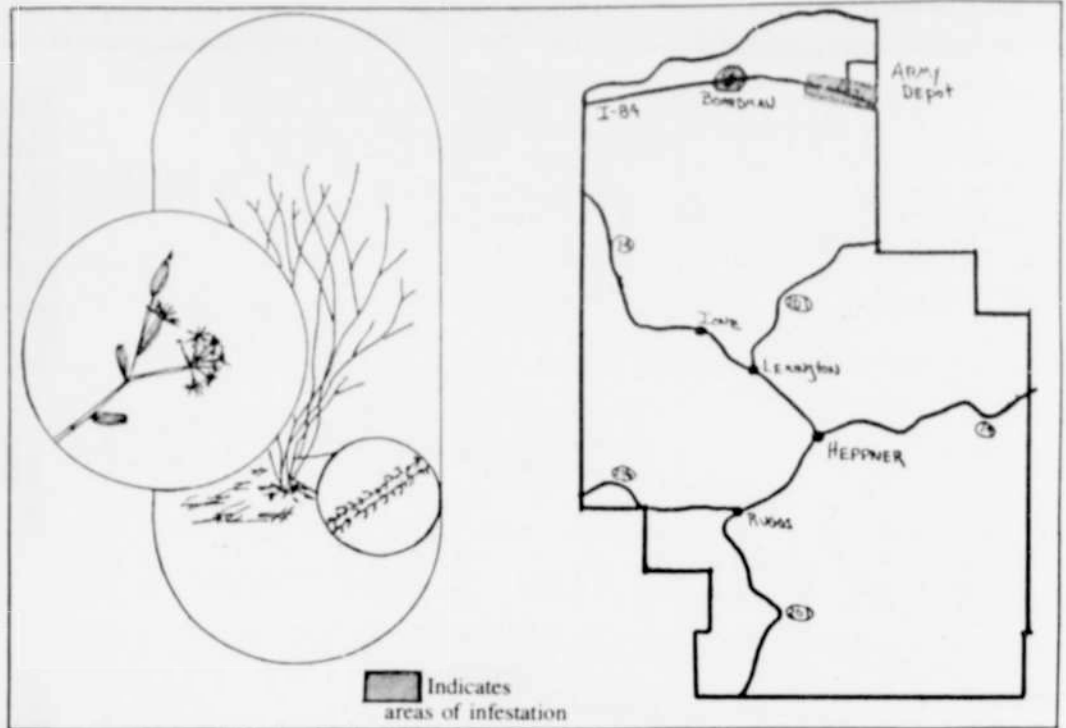
The local unit responded to over 50 fires in the area with 13 turning out to be false alarms. The largest of the fires was about ten acres.

The popular timber management practice for Morrow County continues to be pre-commercial thinning. This practice has many benefits including improved tree growth, greater insect and disease resistance, increased forage production and minimized fire danger. Approximately 350 acres have been completed this year to date with an additional 300 in the process, involving six operators.

Kinzua Corporation has cooperated in some thinning prac-

tices by contracting their clipper and chipper. This process removes the unwanted trees at ground height with a clipping machine. The machine stacks several of the unwanted trees together where a skidder picks up the entire pile. The trees are chipped at a landing and hauled to Heppner to produce energy. The process is cost-efficient and very clean, leaving no slash on the site. The company has shown good foresight in developing this for their own lands as well as being available for contract work on private lands.

## Rush Skeleton Weed mapped but spread likely



Sketch of Rush Skeleton Weed and areas of infestation which were located and mapped this summer. Oregon Department of Agriculture helped fund the project.

Rush skeleton weed has become a major threat to agriculture in Northern Morrow County because it spreads like wildfire.

The first plants were found along Interstate 84 east of Boardman by Weed Supervisor Jim VanWinkle during the summer of 1985. Skeleton weed has no boundaries, so it was bound to show up sooner or later in Morrow County.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture distributed \$192,065 among five Eastern Oregon counties to help finance programs to locate, map and spray skeleton weed. The state's major objective was to find out how much of a problem really existed in Eastern Oregon.

Morrow Soil and Water Conservation District received \$8,500 to begin its program to locate, map and spray the problem weed. The Weed District hired two local people to survey 5,000 acres in Northern Morrow County. Todd Harrison and Kimberly Hughes started work on June 16 with the grueling task of combing every foot of those 6,000 acres. After 12 dreadful weeks of looking, the crew had located 1,054 plants at six different sites. Three of the sites are located along the railroad mainline next to the Army Depot, one inside the Army Depot,

one along the freeway near milepost 172 and the biggest infestation (500 plants found) is located near the football field at Riverside High School in Boardman.

Jim plans on surveying additional acres next year if funds are available; however, the State has not given any indication that there will be funds

available in the future. The only thing that can be done economically is to treat skeleton weed just like any other 'A' list weed and require that the landowner/operator eradicate it.

Unfortunately, this is not the end of this very serious problem.



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