

608 Acres of Ashland Burn Area Reseeded

MAIL TRIBUNE, Medford, Or. Sunday, Dec. 6, 1959



CHARRED TIMBER—Countless trees such as these stand in charred ruin high above forest fire.

Soil Conservation Projects Being Done on FS Land

By BOB WALTERS
Mail Tribune Staff Writer
Ashland—Four months ago, the steeply sloping, heavily forested areas above this city were charred to a dull ebony by a fire that was potentially one of the most dangerous in the history of southwestern Oregon.

But, in about four more months, a portion of these lands gradually will begin a return to the color intended by nature—green.

The U.S. forest service already has spread 8,500 pounds of rye grass seed over the 608 acres for which it is responsible, and an 11-man crew has been working on soil conservation projects for nearly three weeks.

Grass By Spring
Grass should be growing in the area by spring. Trees may be planted there about the same time but, if not, planting will start in the spring of 1961 at the latest.

No single individual stands to take full credit for the re-seeding and conservation projects being conducted in the Rogue River National Forest, but one man—Ashland District Ranger Harold (Red) Thomas—certainly has done his share.

Thomas, a ranger for 23 years and the man who was in charge of the fire fighting operations from start to finish last August, is understandably proud of the work being done. And he terms the cooperation and coordination among officials of state and federal agencies and the city of Ashland as "marvelous."

Local residents will recall that the big blaze started the afternoon of Saturday, Aug. 8, when two relatively small fires, one on a hill west of Jackson Hot Springs and the other on the Ashland Mine rd., burned rapidly through manzanita and brush until they combined.

On Way to Picnic
Red Thomas and his family were on their way to a picnic that Saturday. When he spotted one of the then small fires, he immediately turned back to Ashland.

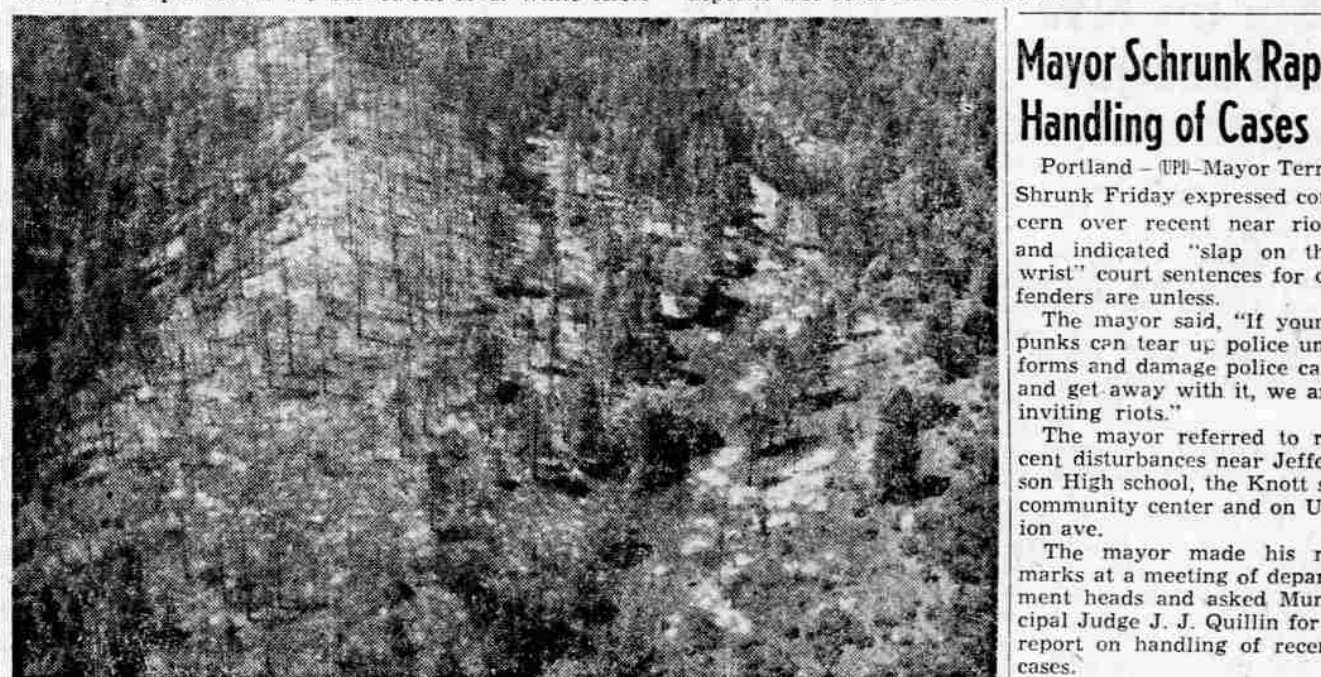
Thomas spent the next two days and nights directing more than 400 state, federal and volunteer fire fighters. The blaze, which eventually covered some 4,600 acres, was brought under control Aug. 10.

The following day, District Warden Curt Nesheim of the state forestry department announced that the two fires "were incendiary and were set by two unidentified persons."

The Ashland office's official report, prepared by As-



RESEEDING PROCESS—Five of the 11-man U.S. forest service crew now working in a 608-acre section of forest above Ashland demonstrate the method in which trees soon will be planted in the burned-out area. While Albie Kerr (left) determines the contour of the land with a long wooden plane, other employees dig furrows. The crew's foreman, Von Steele (far right), brings up the rear and deposits tree seeds in the furrows.



FIRE'S TRAIL—This photograph, taken through some 4,600 acres of hilly timberland above Ashland by Dr. B. A. Cope of the U.S. forest service, shows a portion of the trail blazed by the fire last August.

stant District Ranger Bob Taylor and forwarded to the office of the regional forester, stated that "the fires were started with old newspapers stuffed into heavy plastic bags and set on fire." The arsonists still are "unidentified."

Dangerous Problems
Once the fire was under control, the forest service and the city of Ashland faced other dangerous problems. The blaze had created serious flood and sediment hazards within the Ashland creek watershed, which is located immediately upstream from Ashland and is the city's municipal water supply area.

Something had to be done, and done quickly. But this, of course, took money.

After the Ashland district filed its report, the chief of the U.S. forest service followed through by asking the secretary of agriculture for \$10,800 for re-seeding and conservation work.

Cited by the chief was a 1929 agreement between the department of agriculture and the city of Ashland for the purpose of conserving and protecting the city watershed. The agreement was still in effect, the chief reported, but destruction of the protective forest cover threatened the objectives of the pact and created flood and sediment hazards to the water supply facilities.

Source of Funds
Of the total funds requested, \$9,500 was to come from the forest service, \$330 from the bureau of land management and \$970 from the city of Ashland. The \$9,500 from the department's emergency flood prevention fund was approved Oct. 13 and the BLM and Ashland readily agreed to contribute their shares.

The treatment prescribed in the Ashland district office report was to "establish cover and initiate reforestation of the burn area (and) decrease the hazard of flood damage to Ashland Canyon rd., Granite st., the regulatory reservoir, Lithia park, homes along Granite st. and the Plaza business district."

The expected benefits, the report continued, will equal 1.7 times the cost of the project. This meant that by spending \$10,800, probable flood and sediment damage costing \$17,940 could be avoided.

Acres in Forest
The 608 acres covered by the operations include 456 acres of the Rogue River National Forest, 112 owned by

Ashland and 40 of public domain.

Forest Service Pilot Ed Scholz, making passes as close as 100 feet from the treetops, spread the 8,500 pounds of rye grass seed from a twin-engine Beechcraft plane in a single day, Oct. 19.

Purchase of only rye grass seed led to a substantial savings, according to Thomas. Originally it was planned to buy rye grass and mountain broom seed and the re-seeding project was estimated at a cost of \$4,700.

However, on the recommendation of Avon Denham, assistant regional forester at the Portland office, rye grass seed was purchased for just over \$1,000 and the total cost, including use of the forest service's own plane instead of rented helicopters, came to only \$1,627.

Dry Weather Blessing
Soil conservation work—the digging of contour furrows and construction of check dams—began Oct. 24, and, Thomas said during a visit to the area last week, the recent dry weather has been a blessing.

"The greatest erosion danger," he said, "is the impact of the individual raindrop. Now we have a good carpet of needles and dry weather to protect the seeds that are already in."

The trip to the work area consisted of a bumpy ride up a 3½-mile-long mountain road to a point more than 3,800 feet above sea level.

Contour Furrows
An 11-man crew, working under the direction of foreman Von Steele, a forest service employee, has dug contour furrows over an average half-mile stretch per day and constructed nine check dams daily during a 15-day period. Three of Steele's men work exclusively on the dams.

The workers started at the top "to keep from getting snowed in," Thomas said, and will continue working "rain

or shine, until we get finished."

He estimated that the furrowing and dam building could be completed in about 50 more working days.

Thomas described the road leading to the work area as a major break in carrying out the project. The last 1½ miles of it, he said, were "rediscovered" when the crew began plotting its course. It had last been used about 60 years ago by wagons hauling logs down from the mountain tops.

To Be Fertilized
The 608 acres, which Thomas said are "all the U.S. forest service can legally do anything about," are to be fertilized next spring, in March or April, depending on the weather.

"We hope," he added, "to plant trees in the same furrows next spring." If they are unable to, he said, the trees "will be planted for sure in the spring of '61."

Meanwhile, Thomas said he's pleased with the progress of the work—and the money being saved.

"Any money saved on one thing can be spent on doing another," he concluded, "and we'll continue working until the money runs out or the weather drives us out."

1st Degree Murder Indictment Out

Portland—UPI—An indictment of first degree murder against Ruby Lee Howard was dismissed Friday in the court of Circuit Judge Pro Tem F. C. Howard.

The dismissal was granted on the motion of Deputy District Attorney David Robinson. It will be resubmitted to the grand jury next week.

The judge granted the motion while the process of selecting a jury was uncompleted. The woman is accused of the fatal shooting of Winston Roberts on Aug. 14.

Completion Date For Interchange At GP Is Delayed

Grants Pass—Completion date of the South Grants Pass or Redwood interchange has been set forward until next March or April, according to A. L. Chapman, resident engineer for the state highway department.

The base layers of asphaltic concrete will soon be laid on the new interchange, but the finishing layers will have to wait until warmer weather, Chapman said.

Asphalt cools so rapidly in cold weather that it is impossible to get a smooth surface he said, but the base layers can be poured, and any roughness will be corrected by the finishing layers next spring.

Chapman outlined some major changes in traffic routing that will take place in the next week or so to facilitate construction.

To Use New Bridge
These changes will include ending the use of Caveman bridge for two-way traffic. The bridge will be one-way southbound, and northbound traffic will proceed to the new Seventh st. bridge.

Some existing traffic obstructions on Sixth and Seventh sts. will be removed, according to Chapman, and Voorhies Way will become a two-way street to funnel traffic between them.

Temporary surface routes will be used to bring traffic off of the Williams and Redwood highways, he said. This will mean some stops for cars traveling these routes, but they are only temporary until the new underpasses are ready for use, Chapman added.

Nearly 4,000 feet of curbing will be installed on the underpasses this winter, he said, so they will be ready for paving next spring.

The mayor made his remarks at a meeting of department heads and asked Municipal Judge J. J. Quillin for a report on handling of recent cases.

LEGISLATOR FINED
Salem—UPI—State Sen. Richard Groener (D-Milwaukie) was convicted in Salem municipal court Friday of turning from a wrong lane.

Municipal Judge Douglas A. Hayes fined him \$10. He had pleaded not guilty.

LENIN TRIALS OVER
Moscow—UPI—The official news agency Tass has reported sea trials of the atomic icebreaker Lenin have been completed. The report said the 16,000-ton vessel was capable of circling the world four times without calling at any port.

The Chalice well at Glastonbury, England, has never failed to provide water even in drought periods.

4-H Club News

Happy Stitchers
The second meeting of the Happy Stitchers 4-H club was brought to order by Cherlee Becker, secretary. President Jerry Calhoun and Vice President Kristine Schade were absent.

Marlene Nougier and Joan Eslinger attended to work on Girl Scout needle craft badges. The group practiced embroidery.

The club's new junior leader is Mary Ann Carnegie, who is in her fourth year of 4-H work.

Suzie Elliott, Reporter

Whiz Knits
The fourth meeting of the Phoenix Whiz Knits 4-H club

was held Dec. 2 at Mrs. Grove's home. She handed out pamphlets on knitting for fun to the girls who wanted them. The members who were present were Carol House, Bonnie Simmonds, Marilyn Kantor, Robin Barns, Diane Bolz, Cheryl Bolz, and Linda Cox.

Robin Barns provided refreshments and Cheryl Bolz will provide refreshments at the next meeting, Dec. 16 at the home of Mrs. Grove.

Linda Cox, Reporter

Valley Experimenters
On Nov. 22, the Valley Experimenters 4-H club held their second meeting of the year at the home of their leader, Mr. Glidden.

There was a new member, Margie Root, and three visitors, Rodney Heidemann, Mrs. Root and Mrs. Jones, at the meeting.

There was no new business and the meeting was adjourned early.

Refreshments were served. Larry Mitchell, Reporter

MORAL: DON'T COMPLAIN
Pulaski, Va.—UPI—Claude Ratcliffe complained to police Friday that four cases of roman candles were stolen from his store. He was immediately arrested on a charge of violating the town's anti-fireworks ordinance.

Joseph Conrad, the writer of sea stories who died in 1924, held a British master mariner's certificate.

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