

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# We must speed up salvage

I have been pleased to read two recent editorials in the Sunday Democrat-Herald that support the rapid salvage of timber killed during last year's Biscuit Fire in southern Oregon. The fire burned through hundreds of thousands of acres of the Siskiyou National Forest and the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, cost \$150 million to manage until stopped by fall rains, and killed thousands of animals and hundreds of millions of dollars worth of trees.

Both the "Giesy Plan" and the "OSU Report" profiled in the editorials point out the great amount of resources being wasted due to delays in selling and logging the dead trees. Giesy calls for logging to begin immediately, including the Kalmiopsis, with income earmarked for Oregon schools; OSU projects greatly increased reforestation costs and reduced success that also comes with delay, but suggests leaving the Kalmiopsis untouched, as a "control" for long-term research studies.

Both Giesy and OSU point out the "fireproofing" of forest resources and local communities that would result by removing dead trees, snags, and logs created by the Biscuit Fire. Neither notes the Silver Complex fire that burned in the exact same areas of the Siskiyou and the Kalmiopsis in 1987.

The 15-year period between the Silver and Biscuit fires recalls the famous "six-year jinx" that separated the Tillamook Burn fires of 1933, 1939, 1945 and 1951. Tillamook foresters considered snags "the greatest cause of the spread of fire." The salvage of dead trees and cutting of unmerchantable snags were seen as critical elements to finally bringing those fires under control and creating the foundation for today's Tillamook Forest.

How much of last year's fire was fueled by snags and debris remaining from the Silver? That information would help the public and resource managers determine the urgency needed to address this problem.

And, do snags left in the Silver/Biscuit pose a continuing threat for local wildlife populations and/or increase the likelihood of future wildfires of even greater severity?

This concern was expressed in the Oregon Department of Forestry's August, 1945 "Forest Log", published during the fire events of that year: "Firefighters have been faced with conditions that make it practically impossible to control the fire . . . This is particularly true of the old Tillamook burn area where previous fires have left vast areas covered with snags. The snags continually throw fire across the line in the slightest breeze. . . Drafts and thermals created by the fire in this concentration of fuel have been so great that snags three feet in diameter have been twisted off at the ground line. These same winds have carried the fire for miles ahead of the crews."

OSU has documented the great economic losses associated with delayed salvage of fire-killed trees. Wayne Giesy has given a good example of current economic needs that could be relieved by otherwise wasted resources. The Democrat-Herald has taken the lead in promoting these viewpoints. Human health and safety, wildlife populations, air quality, and aesthetics are other strong reasons to support an accelerated course of action.

This is one of those occasions where it seems far better to learn from history than to repeat it.

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## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, July 27, the 208th day of 2003. There are 157 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

Fifty years ago, on July 27, 1953, the Korean War armistice was signed at Panmunjom, ending three years of fighting.

### On this date:

In 1794, French revolutionary leader Maximilien Robespierre was overthrown and placed under arrest; he was executed the following day.

In 1866, Cyrus W. Field finally succeeded, after two failures, in laying the first underwater telegraph cable between North America and Europe.