

A Chronology of the First 100 Years  
of the Washington Forest Protection Association



1908 – 2008

*A Chronology of the First 100 Years of the  
Washington Forest Protection Association  
1908–2008*

*Produced by History Ink/HistoryLink  
for Washington Forest Protection Association  
To learn more about Washington Forest  
Protection Association visit  
[www.wfpa.org](http://www.wfpa.org)*

*To learn more about Washington state  
history visit [www.historylink.org](http://www.historylink.org)*

**September 11–13, 1902:** In Washington state, a fire known as the Yacolt Burn kills 38 people in Clark, Cowlitz, and Skamania counties and burns more than 370 square miles of timber worth up to \$30 million in 1902 dollars (more than \$600 million in 2008 dollars). The fire, fanned by unusual dry easterly winds, travels 36 miles in 36 hours. There is no organized effort to stop the conflagration. The disaster leads to the first organized efforts to establish fire protection in the state.

**1903:** The Washington State Legislature designates the State Forest Fire Warden as Commissioner of Public Lands, to



*Yacolt Burn, fire rages through the Northwest.*

be assisted by county commissioners designated deputy wardens. However, no funding or authority is provided to the commissioners, who in reality can do very little to protect timber owned by the State.

**1905:** The Legislature establishes a State Board of Fire Commissioners, which appoints a State Forest Fire Warden and deputies. Although \$7,500 is appropriated to fight fires for the biennium of 1905–1907, this money runs out during the summer of 1905. The commission appeals to private timber interests — who own vast tracts of land — for assistance. A total of \$10,300 is raised to fight fires in 1906.

**1907:** Major timberland owners first meet to discuss forming a fire protection association. These meetings will continue into 1908, and leaders in the timber business mail 800 letters to timberland owners inviting them to form a voluntary association to suppress forest fires.

## A Chronology of the First 100 Years of the Washington Forest Protection Association (WFFA)

**April 6, 1908:** Twenty-two timber companies incorporate the Washington Forest Fire Association (WFFA), which establishes the first organized fire patrol system in the state. The life of the association is set at 50 years. (According to Charles Cowan in *The Enemy Is Fire!*, a history of WFFA's first 50 years, this was a common custom in 1908).

The four founding members of WFFA are Merrill-Ring-Bliss, Port Blakely Mill, Simpson Logging and Weyerhaeuser Timber Companies. The association's offices are located in the Colman building on 1st Avenue in Seattle. WFFA recruits 126 members in its first year and assesses its members one-half cent per acre of land patrolled. The Chief Fire Warden organizes a force of 75 men, each of whom is equipped with an axe, a planter's hoe, and a 10-quart water bag (for the fire crew). The State commissions patrolmen as Forest-Rangers-at-Large.



*This map of the 1902 Yacolt Burn shows the widespread devastation brought on by the fire.*



*George Long, General Manager of Weyerhaeuser, was the first president of WFFA.*

**1908:** George Long (1853–1930), General Manager of Weyerhaeuser Timber, is the first president of WFFA. Long will serve as president of WFFA until 1930, and is instrumental in managing the initial partnerships with other timber companies to establish the association and to fight forest fires. Long also recruits many of the 126 members that WFFA gains in its first year.

**May 1908:** D. P. Simons Jr., Chief Fire Warden of WFFA, begins organizing the first patrol system. Seven fire districts are established, from the coast to the Cascades west to east and from the Columbia River to the Canadian border south to north. Each district is in the charge of an inspector whose duty it is to travel around through his district, offering advice to the patrolmen and putting on extra men when necessary. Fires are ranked as “Class A” (small), “Class B” (relatively small, not more than five acres), and “Class C” (large fires requiring extra help and expense).

**1909:** WFFA adds six motorcycles, one motorboat (used for patrols on Hood Canal), and one saddle horse to its complement, enabling its patrolmen to patrol a greater territory with less exertion.

**1910:** The first automobile is furnished by WFFA to two fire inspectors in the southern part of the state. Other inspectors continue to travel via horse, motorcycle, bicycle, and the one motorboat on Hood Canal.



*Early 20th century logging in Washington.*

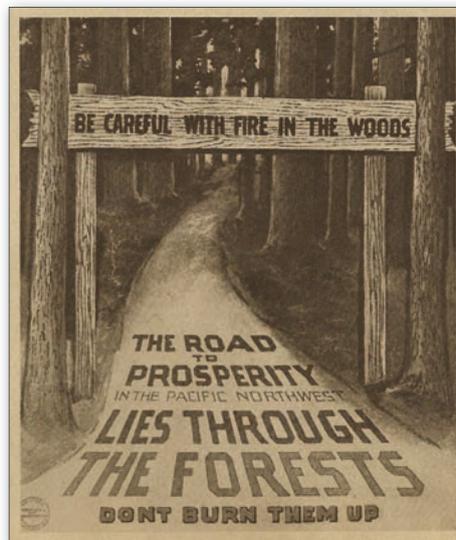
**August 20 and 21, 1910:** More than 1,000 fires strike Idaho and Montana, destroying three million acres and killing 86 people. Large fires also strike Washington in late July 1910 and continue through August, destroying more than 150,000 acres in the state. Improper slash burning (disposal of wood remnants left over after logging) is blamed for the major fires. Aggressive fire protection becomes national policy.

**1911:** The Legislature enacts a new fire law that makes prevention of forest fires of the first importance and full suppression of fires next in importance. The biennial appropriation is increased to \$30,000 for the 1912–1913 biennium. The new law gives the Fire Warden more authority to put more men in the field. WFFA fire patrol grows to 10 inspectors and 75 to 90 rangers. Permits begin to be issued for slash burning, and in 1911 WFFA inaugurates a program for slash burning in the spring, when conditions are more favorable for safe burning. Membership assessment increases to two cents per acre.

**May 1913:** WFFA begins a system of logging-camp inspections. At the time there are nearly 1,500 donkey engines (a steam-powered winch with a cable, often equipped with log skids) operating in Western Washington. These donkey engines have no effective means of stopping sparks from escaping. Rangers obtain logging location reports of logging operations within their districts, which specify to within 40 acres where logging is being conducted. This enables forest patrols to patrol more effectively.

**1914:** For the first time, WFFA increases its advertising against fires (previously limited to posted warning notices) by sending 400 picture slides to “moving picture” theaters and sending several thousand pictures of a campfire scene to be distributed and displayed at public schools in Western Washington.

**1914:** WFFA temporarily arranges to receive weather forecasts from a weather office in Portland whenever easterly winds, which carry the greatest threat of accelerating fires, threaten. Although the value of weather forecasting and fire prevention is clearly recognized after this trial run, it will be another 12 years before fire-weather warning services are placed on a permanent basis.



*By 1914 WFFA was also taking a leading role in educating the public about fire risks.*

**December 31, 1915:** Reports from both the president and secretary in the *1915 WFFA Annual Report* note that more than a million acres of timberland in Western Washington benefit from WFFA patrols without contributing to the cost. This represents about half the total acreage being patrolled in the region. The report notes that Oregon has a compulsory law that if a timber owner will not contribute to a local forest fire protection association, he is assessed for his acreage and required to pay this amount into state funds; the State of Oregon then disburses the funds for fire protection. The call goes out to enact a similar law in Washington.

**1916:** WFFA employs a total of 85 men in the field and the State provides an additional 73 men for patrolling in Western Washington. A custom of holding yearly meetings in several locations each June between WFFA, state, and Forest Service patrolmen begins. These meetings enable the patrolmen to better coordinate their resources and work in cooperation.

**1917:** The Legislature enacts the Forest Patrol Law (Section 6, Chapter 105, Laws of 1917, which in 1986 becomes RCW 76.04.600). Owners of forestlands that have enough timber, standing or down, or flammable debris, to constitute a fire menace to life and property, are required to “provide, during the season of the year when there is danger of forest fires, adequate protection against the spread of fire,” and the failure to do so authorizes the State Forester to provide such protection and to report the cost thereof to the county assessor to be assessed and collected against the property in the same manner as other state and county taxes. The law goes into effect in time for the 1917 fire season. Under an agreement between WFFA and the State Board of Forest Commissioners, WFFA patrols some 600,000 acres belonging to non-members of WFFA, and the State Forester assesses these lands accordingly. Funds collected by the State Forester are paid to WFFA in an amount of two cents per acre of land patrolled, which equals the levy amount WFFA charges its members per acre in 1917. (In *The Enemy Is Fire!*, Cowan notes that in reality, a large number of acres are allowed to revert to counties in lieu of taxes, and WFFA eventually writes off a book debt of more than \$750,000 in unpaid patrol costs.) As a result of the new law, membership increases by nearly 75 percent in WFFA

during the year, from 198 members at the end of 1916 to 346 members at the end of 1917. The office of the State Fire Warden receives more adequate financing as a result of the law, and a field organization develops with the appointment of district fire wardens whose jurisdiction typically is one county.

**1918:** The State Forester levies an assessment against 725,000 acres as a result of WFFA patrols. The fire season is remembered as two seasons, with the first dry season (between April and July) so severe that Governor Ernest Lister supplements the forest patrol with 30 members of the National Guard. WFFA patrol force in 1918 passes 100 for the first time, reaching a total of 101. Forty-eight automobiles are used by the patrollers in 1918, an increase of 17 from 1917.

**January–November 1918:** Spruce loggers log spruce and Douglas-fir trees in Western Washington as part of the World War I effort. The spruce is used in ships and particularly in “aeroplanes.” The 1918 WFFA Annual Report notes that the logging work done by the

**October 1919:** Plans are made to extend an airplane patrol service (already in use in California and Oregon) to Washington. Tentative plans are made to establish a base at Camp Lewis, with four air patrols operating from there, for the 1920 fire season. However, due to a lack of Congressional appropriations, airplane patrols are not implemented in 1920.

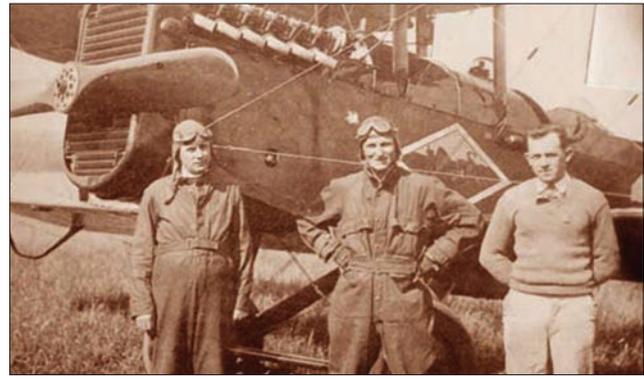
**1919:** Lookout houses are being built atop some of the mountains in Western Washington. At least one of these has already been in use since as far back as 1916.

**1920:** In the 1920 WFFA Annual Report, President Long notes that there is a “growing sentiment in favor of reforestation” of logged-off lands. Patrols are added to some logged-off areas to allow second-growth to take hold in these areas.

**1920:** Eighty men are commissioned by the State Forester as logging-camp wardens in 1920. This program, begun on a trial basis in 1919 with nine wardens, shows success in reducing forest fires. These men supervise the use of logging equipment to ensure all safeguards are used to prevent fires. This effort, though successful in reducing forest fires, eventually is curtailed because it slows the overall logging operations at

the camp, which camp supervisors are usually unwilling to tolerate.

**January 29, 1921:** “The Great Blowdown” strikes the Washington coast. Hurricane-force winds with gusts of more than 100 m.p.h. strike the Washington coast, blowing down power lines and telephone lines; three to seven billion board feet of timber are also blown down. This results in an enormous fire hazard, particularly on the Olympic Peninsula, which bears the brunt of the storm. The U.S. Forest Service, the State, and WFFA deploy additional fire



*Airplanes were first put to use in patrols in 1921. Pictured on the left is George Joy, who was Chief Fire Warden of WFFA from 1913 to 1925.*

suppression crews to protect the region. National Guard troops limit access into affected areas. The U.S. Army responds with air patrols, but the fuel appropriation runs out; the State of Washington and WFFA respond with \$1,029.93 each to buy enough gasoline to keep the JN-4s from Camp Lewis flying.

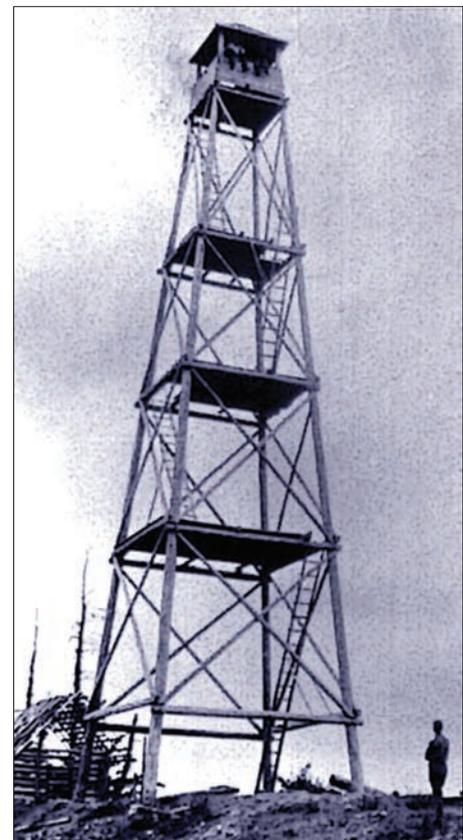
**1921:** The Legislature passes an appropriation of \$5,000 for the State to repurchase logged-off land for the purpose of reforestation. This is the first law of its kind in the state that recognizes the benefits of reforestation. President Long notes in his annual report that in many



*The “Great Blowdown” windstorm struck the Olympic Peninsula in January 1921.*

Spruce Production Division of the U.S. government that year was not as hazardous as a typical logging operation, and credits “painstaking effort put forth by the Spruce Production Division” to prevent fires.

**September 27, 1918:** One of the worst fires of the year destroys the town of Lindberg in Lewis County. The fire, started by a spark from a donkey engine, kills 84 million feet of standing timber and destroys a large amount of logging machinery.



*As part of the ongoing effort to prevent fires, both fire lookout towers and lookout houses were used from the late 1910s through the 1960s for early detection of fires.*

cases the logged-off land is better suited for reforestation than for agricultural purposes, and adds that without it, most of Washington's forests will be gone within 50 years.

**1921:** WFFA, in conjunction with the State Forestry Department, improves 50 locations in Western Washington for use as campgrounds by tourists. By 1921 automobile travel is becoming more widespread and often the tourists camp wherever they can. Providing a safe campsite from which surrounding underbrush has been removed proves to be another effective means of reducing accidental fires.

**October 1921:** The Washington State Forestry Conference organizes under the auspices of the State Development Bureau of the Seattle Chamber of

1922 fire season is one of the worst on record in Western Washington, with 947 fires reported and more than 300,000 (possibly more than 350,000 — accounts differ) acres burned.

**May 31, 1922:** Fires sweep across eastern King County as part of the disastrous 1922 fire season. There are no fatalities, but more than a dozen men are injured; hundreds of thousands of dollars of property are destroyed, and the northern half of the town of Cedar Falls is destroyed.

**October 1922:** At the annual Washington State Forestry Conference, seven principal recommendations are made to prevent the risk of forest fires. For the first time, it is recommended that slash burning be prohibited between June and August. The Legislature adopts part

of these recommendations during its session in 1923.

**1923:** As a result of a particularly bad fire season in 1922, manufacturers develop better mechanical methods of fire protection. Portable gasoline pumps become more widely used in the state in fighting forest fires. WFFA purchases 12 such portable pumps in 1923, each weighing between 80 and 140 pounds, and each equipped with 1,000 feet of hose. Lighter pumps become available later in the 1920s.

**1923:** Writers for the U.S. Forest Service publish papers showing the relationship between weather and fires. Although hot weather has long been

known to be conducive for fires, for the first time low relative humidity (below 35 percent) is also shown to have a significant effect. The paper demonstrates that forest fuels dry out more rapidly when the humidity is low, and recommends slash burning only in the spring, adding that slash burning in the fall destroys seeds in the slash essential for forest regeneration. Suggestions to shut down logging operations in extreme fire weather are initially ignored.

**1923:** The Legislature creates a State Forest Board and authorizes the board to purchase lands suitable for reforestation at a maximum of \$6 per acre. A maximum of \$200,000 for the period April 1923–March 1925 is authorized to be spent for such purchases. During 1923, the State purchases several thousand acres as a result of the new law.

**June 7, 1924:** The U.S. Congress enacts the Clarke-McNary Act. The act sets up a formula that the U.S. government will assume 25 percent of a state's cost of fire prevention and suppression, the states will assume 25 percent, and forest landowners 50 percent. States are required to observe minimal standards that are set up for the prevention and suppression of forest fires, and if these standards are met, 25 percent of their costs will be reimbursed by the federal government.

**July 1924:** In the spring of 1924, WFFA asks the U.S. Weather Bureau to make a special study of fire weather causes and effects, and offers to pay all necessary extra expense. The weather service initially rejects this proposal, but later in the year assigns two men for this duty. WFFA furnishes equipment (particularly hygrothermographs, which record both temperature and humidity) for seven observation stations. WFFA also begins telegraphing fire-warning forecasts to loggers and others. This program expands in 1925.

**1925:** Many logging camps begin using hair hygrometers and sling psychrometers during the mid-1920s to determine relative humidity to predict fire weather. A hair hygrometer uses strands of hair (with oils removed) attached to levers to amplify changes in hair length, since hair lengthens as humidity increases. A sling psychrometer consists of two thermometers, a dry bulb thermometer and wet bulb thermometer; readings are taken from both thermometers and compared and then the relative humidity is calculated by use of a chart.

**1925:** WFFA purchases its first truck, a Graham Brothers one-ton, in which are installed three gas pumps, 3,000 feet of fire hose, and sundry tools. The truck is stationed in Seattle and dispatched to fires across Western Washington upon request. Newspapers and radio stations in Seattle begin publishing fire-weather-situation forecasts in 1925.

**July 1, 1926:** Fire-weather forecasts are placed on a permanent basis. Starting



*WFFA developed a fire truck capable of riding on both rail and road.*

Commerce. For at least the next four decades this is the forum where much of the forestry legislation in the state originates.

**1922:** WFFA patrol force now totals 178, consisting of 20 district wardens, 75 regular patrolmen, and 83 extra patrolmen. The State employs an additional 55 patrolmen, for a combined total of 233 men; 110 of these men (or nearly half) are now using automobiles in their work. The extra men are kept busy: The

on this date they are officially recognized as one of the special phases of Weather Bureau activities. Funds are appropriated to pay the salary of meteorologists now permanently assigned to fire-weather projects.

**1926:** The State provides three special police officers, whose salaries are supplemented by WFFA, to patrol the forests to insure the forest laws are being met. The program proves successful, with a number of violators being caught and fined.



*In 1927 Charles Cowan became Chief Fire Warden.*

**February 1927:** By this time at least one insurance company, the Loggers Insurance Company, attaches a rider called "Humidity Warranty for Logging Risks" to its policies, requiring an insured logger to completely suspend operations at any time between April and October when the humidity at the logging camp falls below 30 percent.

**1927:** In 1927 WFFA consists of 277 members, and 3.1 million acres of land are patrolled, of which 800,000 acres are logged-off areas. Charles Cowan (1887-1969) becomes Chief Fire Warden, and is later named Manager. He serves WFFA for over 30 years, until 1957.

**1928:** WFFA begins to use tank pumps. These small, portable pumps represent a significant increase in firefighting

capacity. The pumps can be filled with water to stop spot fires, but they can also be filled with coal oil to start back fires and for slash burning. Tank pumps are found to be particularly useful for lighting back fires; before this time a pressure torch (essentially a flame thrower) was used, which was more clumsy and carried more risk to the person using it.

**1928:** WFFA purchases a fire hall in Seattle to store its equipment, and develops sharpening tools to maintain this equipment. This not only provides a central location for all of its equipment but also a safer one. Before this time equipment had been stored wherever space could be found on the District Warden's premises; often rats dined on WFFA's fire hose.

**1929:** Lookout towers begin to become widely used to detect fires, and four such towers are built atop mountains in Western Washington in 1929. The towers are designed and erected by WFFA in cooperation with the State, and range in height from 59 to 119 feet. Many are equipped with ladders and others with stairs, but the only way to ascend at least one tower (the Capitol Peak tower west of Olympia) is by rigging up a bosun's chair and rappelling up the tower; the climber pulls himself up to the floor of the tower in this manner while being aided by a counterweight which drops from the tower to the ground as the ranger ascends the tower. These lookout towers prove to be quite successful in the early detection of fires. Four more towers are built in Western Washington in 1930 alone; more towers follow, and will be used for the next 30 to 40 years as part of firefighting efforts. More roads, trails, and telephone lines are soon built by WFFA for these towers, which also provides easier access for firefighters in the event of fire.

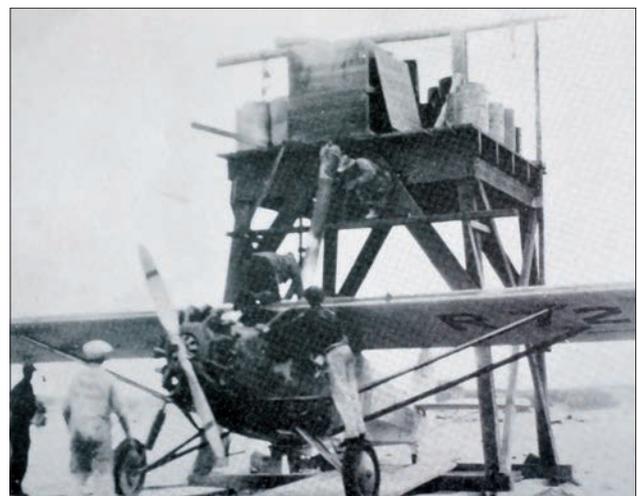
**1929:** WFFA purchases its first tractor, a 15-horsepower Caterpillar, and uses it with a plow that WFFA builds. When the tractor can be used, it is found to be more effective in fighting fires than a crew of 50 men. The tractor is also used to remove old ties, to grade roads, and to raise completed bents for lookout towers.

**March 11, 1930:** George Long, President of WFFA since its inception in 1908, resigns. (He dies suddenly in Klamath Falls, Oregon, on August 2, 1930.)

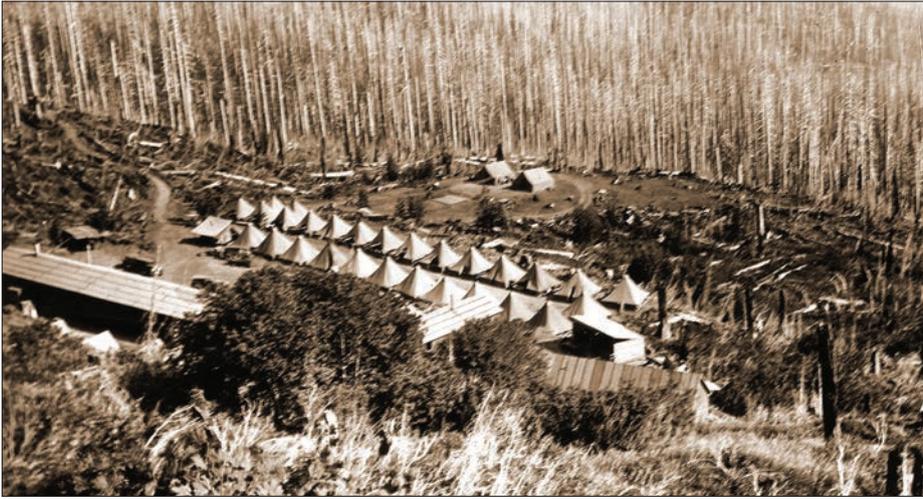
**1930:** The *1930 WFFA Annual Report* notes that hose connections have improved, with a newer standard male-female type of coupling now giving a firm watertight connection with an inch turn of the coupling; it is stronger and much faster to use, and the report notes that 15 minutes are saved per 1,000 feet of fire hose used, thanks to this new coupling.

**1930:** With the onset of the Great Depression, incendiary (deliberately set) fires become a significant problem in 1930. These fires, also called "make work" fires, are often set by homeless or similarly displaced people who have taken up residence on logged-off land or in abandoned logging camps. When firefighters arrive, they are often met by the same people who set the fire, who offer to help put it out, for pay. Given the hard economic times, little action is taken against the arsonists, and arson fires continue to be a major source of fire loss in Western Washington during the early 1930s as the Great Depression continues.

**1931:** Incendiary fires continue to plague WFFA, with more than 20 percent of fires reported in Western Washington this year to have been deliberately set. But this year is remembered for WFFA's efforts to fight the hemlock looper in Pacific County, a moth which, in its larvae stage, is a defoliator and



*WFFA designed its own hopper to distribute pesticide. This was the first aerial effort to fight a forest pest epidemic in the United States.*



*Partnering with WFFA in Washington state, CCC camps sprang up throughout Western Washington and were staffed by young men known as “CCC boys.”*

very destructive to hemlock, Douglas-fir, and spruce. WFFA takes a lead role in coordinating the attack on this pest, and state, county, and some private landowners cooperate in conducting a dusting operation from the air, still a relatively new way to combat pest infestations. WFFA designs its own hopper to distribute 1,000 pounds of pesticide and contracts with a local flying company to spray it on the affected areas.

**1933:** Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps develop. The CCC was developed by President Roosevelt shortly after his inauguration in March 1933 as a work relief program to combat unemployment. Two hundred young men, ranging in age from 18 to 25, begin assembling in June, and by the end of July 12 companies are stationed in several camps set up throughout the state, with superintendents and

foremen of the camps selected from local experienced men. The “CCC boys” build roads, trails, ranger houses, and fire towers, and engage in some limited fire fighting and tree planting. Incendiary fires sharply drop in 1933 as a result of the CCC presence, because the CCC staff on hand is sufficient to fight fires and it is no longer necessary to hire men on the spot.

**1934:** CCC men continue to play an important role in WFFA in 1934: With the assistance of WFFA, they erect three new fire towers that year in Western Washington, and in 1933 and 1934 they develop a total of 1,100 miles of new road in their territory, either by developing the road entirely or converting old logging grades into roads. The CCC continues to develop into a more effective firefighting force as well. Incendiary fires continue to decrease.

**June 1, 1934:** Article 10 of the National Lumber Code goes into effect: Chief Fire Warden Charles Cowan participates in drafting some of the regulations in the code. Whenever dangerous fire weather threatens, the State Forester can issue logging shutdown orders subject to the approval of a committee representing the loggers. According to Cowan, most loggers “cheerfully accept” the new rules. While fires caused by logging have already been declining since the late 1920s, they drop an impressive 75 percent during the next two years from their average since 1920, and the total number of acres burned from these fires drops even more dramatically from the 14-year average, by 90 percent. In 1934 and 1935 logging fires make up less than 2 percent of the total fires in Western Washington, showing that prevention of fires is even more significant than suppression of fires. The regulations also require the forest products industry to prepare plans to restore logged lands. Weyerhaeuser loggers leave seed trees standing to naturally populate the new forests.

**1935:** The U.S. Supreme Court strikes down Article 10 in May 1935, but much of the industry continues to voluntarily comply. Recreational fires accidentally set make up 35 percent of fires in the same territory during the year, reflecting the increasing use of privately owned forest lands by the general public. In mid-summer the number of CCC camps in Western Washington is reduced from 20 to 9.

**1935:** The State establishes a 30-acre forest nursery in the Capitol State Forest near Littlerock (Thurston County), complete with cone-drying facilities, seed beds, irrigation systems, and a power extractor that pulls seeds from cones. Directed by State Forester T. S. Goodyear, the nursery marks the first time the State has taken steps to perpetuate tree growth in the state. CCC crews also plant 1.25 million Douglas-fir nursery seedlings to reforest 15,624 acres of state trust lands.

**1936:** The *1936 WFFA Annual Report* notes that the 15-year average of total number of acres burned in fires each year on association lands in Western Washington is 120,357; however, by this time more effective firefighting measures are taking effect and this number will begin to drop rapidly over the next few years.



*By the late 1930s further technological improvements in portable pumps were making firefighter's jobs easier by allowing them to respond to fires much more quickly, while many of the fires were still small.*

**December 1937:** WFFA concludes the year with the approach of its 30th anniversary. The Association patrols 2.6 million acres of forest lands owned by 171 individuals and corporations; members pay three cents an acre. The Association also patrols an additional 2.1 million acres of land under contract for patrol protection with the State Division of Forestry; these property owners are assessed for this service under provisions of the Forest Patrol Law. Fires started by recreation continue to be the largest cause of fires in Western Washington. In 1937 the Legislature extends the fire season for one month, from April 15 to October 15. Previously the season had run from May 1 through September 30.

**1938:** WFFA begins to measure fuel moisture as part of its assessment of fire risk.

**1939:** WFFA begins fighting small roadside fires with five-gallon pump cans. Two different kinds of pumps are installed on pickup trucks, one driven by a fan belt and the other by a power take-off, which is a driveshaft used to draw power from the engine to the pump. The reliability of engines now enables a fire patrolman to put out many fires by himself in their early stages, if the weather conditions are not extremely hazardous. The program is so successful that it is later enlarged. The CCC continues to provide valuable assistance to WFFA, both in fire fighting and in the construction of forest roads, telephone lines, and fire towers, as well as in tree planting.

**1940:** All WFFA patrol trucks are equipped with portable pumps utilizing the fan-belt method. The trucks are then equipped with three 55-gallon barrels and are used to fight roadside fires; suction hoses are also provided which enable water to be taken from nearby creeks during a fire. These pump trucks prove successful, increasing the number of fires controlled to under a quarter acre in 1940 (a rather difficult fire year) to 50 percent of all fires. Yarders in logging yards capable of operating the pumps and railroad speeders pulling light fast cars capable of carrying the water barrels needed to fight fires are also used to fight logging fires. Smaller crews of four men are used on an experimental basis to fight fires, with some success.

**May 31, 1940:** Keep Washington Green is formed by a proclamation issued by Washington Governor Clarence Martin. Keep Washington Green is an organization that works through public education



*In 1941 Weyerhaeuser Timber Company dedicated the nation's first tree farm near Montesano in Grays Harbor County.*

from 1940 until 1995 to prevent human-caused forest and range wildfires.

**1941:** CCC enrollment in WFFA dwindles dramatically during the year as the national defense effort steps up immediately prior to American involvement in World War II. Congress appropriates \$1 million for the establishment of another fire-defense organization in the states; Washington receives \$150,000 of these funds and officials set up an organization that places an additional 130 men in the field. For the first time since 1925, recreational fires are not the chief cause of fires in Western Washington during the year (lightning is.) WFFA supplements its use of portable pumps by trying light trailers on an experimental basis. These trailers can carry an additional 200 gallons of water over and above an additional 100 gallons on the pickup truck. The trailer can be easily detached and towed back to the water source for refilling.

**June 21, 1941:** Weyerhaeuser Timber Company dedicates the nation's first tree farm near Montesano in Grays Harbor County. The 130,000-acre tract, named the Clemons Tree Farm, is named after local logger Charles H. Clemons. By the end of the twentieth century, there will be more than 70,000 tree farms in the United States comprising more than 93 million acres of land.

**1942:** "The season 1942 was a year which was accompanied by the alarms of war" (Report of Chief Fire Warden, 1942 WFFA Annual Report, p. 6). In January all forest-protection agencies, both state and national, meet to discuss potential forest-fire contingencies. There is a particular fear that Japan will attempt to firebomb Washington state forests and start a conflagration of enormous proportions. The CCC is disbanded, and manpower shortages develop because of the war; emergency fire crews (consisting mostly of high school youths) are set up at federal expense and placed under the supervision of the State Forester. Forest patrols open early in the season to prevent sabotage; repair and replacement of broken equipment becomes difficult due to the war effort. Weather forecasts cease to be broadcast, though the U.S. Weather Service provides information (subject to military censorship) directly to forest-protection agencies. Radio stations and newspapers increase coverage for the need for fire prevention, which proves effective; 1942 shows



*In 1946 Washington state's first forest practices act took effect, which required loggers to plant trees to replace ones that they had harvested.*

a drop in number of fires and an even bigger drop in number of acres burned.

**1943:** Nearly two million acres of forest land are closed to the public during 1943 in an effort to reduce fire hazard. More than 800 high school youths, ranging in age from 16 to 18, are recruited to fight fires.

**February 12, 1945:** The first of 28 incendiary balloons launched from Japan and known to land in Washington are discovered seven miles north of Spokane. Two unexploded bombs are discovered and neutralized. As many as 9,000 balloons are sent aloft from the Japanese island of Hokkaido beginning in November 1944 to set forest fires in order to siphon manpower and resources away from the war effort; however, this effort is not successful.

**1945:** World War II ends in September, and normal travel and forest use begins slowly to resume. The Legislature passes the Forest Practices Act, which goes into effect on January 1, 1946.

**January 1, 1946:** The Forest Practices Act goes into effect. This act requires Washington loggers to plant trees to replace the logs that they have harvested, thereby ensuring future forest growth. Any logger seeking a permit to cut timber has to agree to provide adequate reforestation. This also applies to a private landowner cutting his own trees. The State Division of Forestry is empowered to enforce the provisions and a nine-member board will adopt rules to protect soils, water, fish, wildlife,

and public capital improvements from the impacts of logging. Some timber interests oppose the statute and appeal its constitutionality to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upholds the law.

**1946:** Two WFFA International trucks are converted into tank trucks, each equipped with 500-gallon sheet-steel tanks filled and emptied by a Pacific Marine pump powered by a transmission takeoff from the engine. William "Bill" Larsen (1916 - 2004) joins WFFA. He serves the Association, first as Assistant Chief Fire Warden, then Chief Fire Warden, and finally as Manager, until 1977.

**1947:** The Rue Creek Agreement is entered into between WFFA and a number of logging operators in an area of high fire hazard in Pacific County. (An adjacent area, Trap Creek, is added to the organization by 1953.) WFFA makes additional firefighting equipment available to members of this local association (none of whom are actual WFFA members), and in turn, the Rue Creek members assess themselves 20 cents an acre annually for a special patrolman for the area who has immediate access to the firefighting equipment. This is the earliest such agreement entered into by WFFA (others will follow), and provides immediate protection for fires within the members' boundaries. Prior to this time members had to wait for WFFA firefighters and equipment to arrive from other locations, which in some cases took hours — a crucial amount of time during a fire. The Rue Creek Agreement is renewed annually through 1959.

**April 1947:** The State Division of Forestry notifies WFFA that it will no longer renew the annual patrol contract to protect state-assessed lands, which it has entered into with WFFA since 1917. This is the culmination of a deteriorating relationship which has been ongoing between the State and WFFA for several years. The State takes over protection of all assessed forest lands previously contracted to WFFA, and stops providing to WFFA information regarding its maintenance, improvements, and law enforcement work in the field.

**1948:** WFFA enters into a contract with the State in which the State undertakes the actual field protection of WFFA-member lands. The Rainier Forest Association develops for the purpose of fighting fires specifically within its boundaries (this association dissolves in 1962). Chemical spraying for brush control begins, directed at alder trees that grow on roadsides, and proves moderately successful. WFFA begins inspecting fire-law compliance and other fire-prevention measures of logging operations on member and neighboring lands, and continues this practice for 20 years. These inspections are actually actions supplemental to similar inspections done by the State.

**1949:** District fire wardens now begin closing forest lands by district instead of all through Western Washington when conditions are hazardous. This makes sense, since some areas in the region can be dangerously dry while others might be socked in with fog and have no fire danger.

**1950:** WFFA continues to emphasize its focus on fire prevention, inspecting firefighting equipment and adding patrols on tree farms owned by member companies. In 1950 there are membership holdings of 3,260,653 acres listed with WFFA.

**1951:** Meteorologically 1951's fire season mirrors the extreme fire conditions of 1922, considered one of the worst in the state's history, but thanks to cooperation between the State Division of Forestry, logging operators, WFFA, and the Rainier Forest Association, total acres lost in 1951 is barely 10 percent that of 1922 (35,000 acres as compared to 300,000 to 350,000 acres). This demonstrates how far both fire prevention and firefighting techniques have come in less than 30 years. In 1951 WFFA also is involved in the new technique of



WFFA began to enter into separate agreements with smaller, local fire associations for the purpose of providing fire protection specifically within the particular association's boundaries, such as the Rainier Forest Association and Abernathy Forest Association.

cloud seeding with silver iodide to produce rain, but the results are unclear. Cloud-seeding experiments continue in 1952. Two WFFA inspector cars are equipped with two-way radios, enabling faster communication when a new fire is reported or hazardous conditions exist. The Legislature passes a snag-falling law, which provides additional protection in preventing forest fires; the law requires that standing dead trees be removed by logging operators on land upon which they are working.

**September 20, 1951:** A major forest fire burns 33,000 acres and 32 buildings in Forks, and the town of 1,000 residents is evacuated. Much of the damage to the town is on its outskirts; a fortuitous drop in the wind at the last minute prevents the town itself from going up in flames.

**1952:** The Abernathy Forest Association is incorporated to provide extra protection to 109,000 acres of land in Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Lewis counties, and operates through 1963. WFFA begins a method of warning the public of high fire risk by utilizing large loudspeakers, or bull horns, mounted on an airplane and flying over hazardous areas broadcasting these warnings. (The State subsequently takes over the system and utilizes it in Eastern Washington.) The new medium of television begins contributing to the fire-prevention cause. James Bridge, president of WFFA since George Long's resignation in 1930, dies unexpectedly on August 28, 1952.

**1952:** WFFA joins with the Oregon Forest Fire Association and a group of Oregon logging operators to produce a film, *The Enemy Is Fire*, to educate loggers on many common mistakes made in logging operations that can lead to a fire and to show the value of fire prevention.

The film is first shown to loggers in the spring of 1953 and proves so popular that it is also shown to other interested groups and later to schoolchildren. A second film, *Fire Weather*, is completed late in 1955 and proves equally as successful; these films continue to be shown into the 1960s.

**1954:** WFFA records its best season since its inception in 1908, with both the fewest number of fires (369) and the fewest number of acres burned (607). WFFA begins testing ejectors, suction hoses capable of bringing otherwise inaccessible pressurized water within reach. Airplane patrols are used by the Rainier Forest Association to spot lightning fires and weekend fires often caused by recreationists.

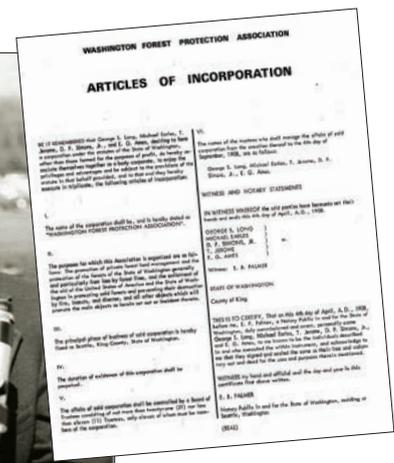
**1955:** The Legislature creates two "honor camps." One camp, manned by 65 selected inmates from the Washington State Penitentiary at Walla Walla, is authorized to remove snags from the area of the Yacolt Burn, which is still con-

sidered hazardous. The second camp, manned from the prison at Monroe, is authorized to develop state forest lands in western Clallam County. A major early freeze strikes Western Washington in early November 1955, severely damaging crops and younger (less than 30 years old) second-growth forests, which slows WFFA's ongoing forest regeneration efforts.

**1956:** KING-5 TV begins broadcasting forest-fire weather information at 6:50 p.m.; this mirrors a report of snow and ice conditions over the mountain passes that KING-5 has been broadcasting in the winter. This helps alert the public to adverse weather conditions and is an additional deterrent to fires started by carelessness.

**1957:** The Legislature creates the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to consolidate the work of several agencies responsible for state and privately owned forest and forest practices. It is felt that one department is better able to manage state lands, regulate the timber harvest, and guarantee a sustainable yield of timber through reforestation. (Legislation proposing such a department had been unsuccessfully presented several times to the Legislature as far back as 1933.) The Department of Natural Resources brings together the Division of Forestry, the Board of State Land Commissioners, and others. The Legislature also creates a State Forest Board, which advises the Department of Natural Resources; the Board holds its first meeting on April 1, 1957.

**January 1958:** With the approaching expiration (in April 1958) of the 50-year



In 1958 the Washington Forest Fire Association reincorporated as the Washington Forest Protection Association under the direction of Executive Director Bill Larsen, and began to focus on broader issues. This was only the first of a series of sweeping changes for the Association.

corporate life of WFFA, WFFA is re-incorporated as the Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA).

**1958:** Charles Cowan retires. Cowan, author of *The Enemy Is Fire!*, served for 31 years in WFFA, first as Chief Fire Warden, and, beginning in 1950, as Manager. The fire-weather staff at the Department of Natural Resources devises a system that divides the western half of the state into 21 zones in recognition of the different elevation, topography, and prevailing weather exposures in each zone. Detailed weather forecasts are now provided to these zones. Notes the *1958 WFPA Annual Report*, "This is a distinct step toward the localized forecasting so long desired by field personnel."

**1958:** The Webster Forest Nursery, named after Mike Webster, then supervisor of the newly formed Department of Natural Resources, is established on 80 acres near Olympia. In 2008, this nursery consists of 270 acres of bare-root ground and 30,000 square feet of greenhouses. The objective of the Webster Forest Nursery is to produce 8 to 10 million seedlings annually to be planted on DNR-managed state trust land, and to make available to private landowners with small holdings 3 to 5 million seedlings that can be planted to meet the requirements of the State Forest Practices Act.

**1959:** Two-way radios (industrial radios), first used by WFFA in 1951, are now widely used by WFPA, and with good effect. These channels are used to provide instant weather reports from all areas of operations, allowing field supervisors to quickly react to hazardous weather conditions by closing down logging operations in the area; the radios are also used for faster reporting of fires.



*A disastrous windstorm strikes Western Washington in 1962.*

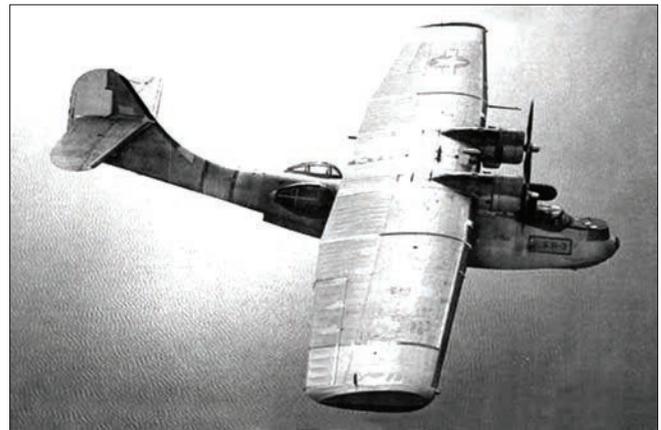
**1960:** WFPA inaugurates a bear control agreement in the northern half of Grays Harbor County. This operation expands to cover 2,100 square miles in 1961. It is reported that bears began killing trees in the area in the late 1940s, and the Game Department declared them to be predators. Landowners assess themselves four cents an acre for this protection. Ankle snares and, in some cases, dogs are used to trap the bears; 167 bears are reported taken during the 1960 season. Later in the 1960s, sports hunters are allowed to keep the bear population in check.

**1961:** Two positions for District Forester are created, one for "the area from Skamania to Clallam counties" and the other for "the remaining counties." These foresters inspect fire-prevention measures in logging operations and provide reports concerning legal requirements and recommendations for extra safety precautions to both the field supervisor and the company manager. Seven local fire-protection committees are created in Western Washington to more cooperatively and effectively resolve protection problems that might be unique to their area. Also in 1961, WFPA successfully petitions the Grays Harbor County Commissioners to restrict open-range cattle grazing in the county, as some cattle owners have been putting their cows on tree farm lands in such large numbers that trees are destroyed, creating a fire risk. This program to limit cattle grazing expands to Pierce County in 1962, and to additional counties as the 1960s progress.

**October 12, 1962:** A disastrous windstorm strikes Western Washington, with wind gusts of up to 150 m.p.h. in Wahkiakum County; the National Weather Service later designates it as Washington's worst weather disaster of the twentieth century. Approximately 17 billion board feet

of timber are blown down, far eclipsing the amount of board timber blown down in "The Great Blowdown" of January 1921. As was the case in 1921, the Olympic Peninsula is particularly affected by the storm. A massive salvage effort ensues, but the supply exceeds the demand in regional lumber mills. It takes several years to remove all of the destroyed timber from the scene of the blowdown. In 1966, approximately 350 million board feet of timber are shipped to Japan.

**1963:** Hemlock looper again breaks out in Pacific County; it is the first such infestation since 1931. The Department of Natural Resources uses the pesticide



*In 1963 the WFPA and Department of Natural Resources stationed a water-scooping aerial tanker, originally used in the Second World War, in Kelso, Washington, to fight fires.*

DDT to fight the infestation, which brings intense national scrutiny because of the recent publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which details the hazards of DDT. Helicopters are used to provide spraying; the project is closely supervised. At the end of 1963 the project is reported to be a success. WFPA reproduces 23 previously published articles about various aspects of pesticide use and its effects under the title *You and Forest Chemicals* and distributes 350 copies to Washington state foresters.

**1963:** WFPA and Department of Natural Resources station a water-scooping aerial tanker at Kelso, Washington. The cost is \$15,000 for 45 hours of flying time; "Scoop I," as the plane is called, is used on five fires, and proves to be a valuable addition in fire fighting. Also in 1963, Dow Chemical Company releases a new gelling agent that when added to water causes it to form into a gelatinous mass. When dropped, this gel clings to everything it lands on, providing an excellent fire retardant that is much

slower to evaporate than regular water or other fire retardants already in use.

**1964:** WFPA begins providing aerial photography in what becomes known as the “small scale aerial photography project” to its members in Southwestern Washington. By 1966 this program expands to include the area east of Puget Sound north to the Canadian border, as well as the Olympic Peninsula. These photos are made more useful by superimposing township and range lines in a square grid over the aerial images. They can then be used for forest management and protection by aerial fire detection, as well as for reproduction to create low-cost field maps. WFPA also begins a cooperative bear research program in conjunction with other organizations. Study areas are established and radio tracking devices are used on bears to study their habits. It is hoped that this research will lead to a better solution of the bear-control problem. This program continues through 1968.

**1966:** WFPA reorganizes and becomes a state-wide organization. This reorganization, begun late in 1965, is the result of requests by forest landowners in the state for WFPA to take on an additional job of determining the consequences of public policies on forest lands and to develop policies to strengthen the forestry segment of the state’s economy, as well as to provide a liaison between WFPA members and the public and governmental agencies in Washington state. After WFPA becomes a state-wide organization, for the first time representatives from Eastern Washington sit on WFPA Board of Trustees, and 17 companies and individuals from Eastern Washington apply for membership in WFPA. WFPA membership holdings at the end of 1966 are nearly 3.9 million acres in Western Washington alone, but Eastern Washington holdings add almost another 1 million acres to the total.

**1967:** Aerial reconnaissance for fires begins to replace the use of fire tower lookouts in Western Washington. WFPA uses a helicopter for the first time to fight fires in 1967. A Kaman twin-rotor helicopter, which carries 250 gallons of water in a container slung from a cargo hook under the aircraft, is leased. WFPA will expand its helicopter fleet to four



*In 1964 the WFPA embarked on an ambitious aerial photography project in Western Washington.*

in 1970. WFPA begins using forest-fire simulators for training at the U.S. Forest Service office in Redmond, Oregon. Realistic forest-fire problems are simulated on the machine and the trainee can practice actions to control the fire, thus enabling him to be better prepared to fight an actual fire. In 1968, WFPA will use a similar simulator located at the training center of the Department of Natural Resources in Shelton, Washington. WFPA devises a system to allow persons in aircraft to identify radio-equipped cars by a particular coded number in the car’s radio equipment; a corresponding number decal is placed on the car’s roof top to make it identifiable from the air. This enables persons in aircraft to more efficiently establish radio contact with the individual radio operator through his individual radio network. WFPA also begins publishing uniform maps with unified hunting rules for hunters in its districts.

**1967:** WFPA embarks on two projects to better inform the public of the issues involving forestland management. The projects include a program of providing tours for state legislators; WFPA also sponsors a monthly luncheon for the Seattle press at which an expert speaks on a timely subject and answers questions. The tours and press luncheons are designed to provide a broader educational background to the public of the issues presented in forestry as opposed

to focusing on any particular issue. These projects continue into the early 1970s.

**1968:** The U.S. Park Service begins allowing some natural fires to burn in certain areas, and begins employing some manager-ignited fires. Parks in the Northwest gradually adopt the prescribed-burning approach during the 1970s.

**1969:** Charles Cowan, Chief Fire Warden from 1927 until 1958, dies. Although he had been retired for more than a decade, he had continued to provide guidance to his successor on an as-needed basis until shortly before his death. Also in 1969, the Department of Natural Resources takes over the aerial photography program from WFPA.

**1970:** The *1970 WFPA Annual Report* notes that the 20-year annual average between 1950 and 1969 of total number of acres burned in fires on Association lands is 4,480. This is a 96 percent decrease from the period 1920–1935, when the annual average destroyed was more than 120,000 acres. However, the total number of fires each year remains largely unchanged; the 1920–1935 average is 777 fires annually and the 1950–1969 average is 791. These facts show the advances made in firefighting technology over the course of half a century.

**1971:** WFPA increases its legislative activity as the result of increased attention from the public to environmental issues that affect forest land, as well as forest taxation issues, another hot-button topic. WFPA advocates replacing the current ad valorem property tax on a growing timber crop with a tax on timber at the time of harvest. A new tax law is passed in 1971 (which takes effect in January 1972) that phases out the ad valorem tax on timber over a period of three years and phases in an excise tax on the value of the timber harvested.

**1971:** The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) is enacted (43.21C RCW). The act seeks to maintain and improve environmental quality by requiring that governmental agencies give proper consideration to environmental matters when making decisions on actions that may impact the environment. This results in “a bewildering array of fractionated, uncoordinated regulations administered by ... many governmental

entities” (1973 WFPA Annual Report, p. 8) and results in increasing difficulties for effective forest management. In an attempt to counter this trend, the Washington Legislature passes the Forest Practices Act in 1973.

**1972:** Some U.S. Forest Service employees experiment with allowing lightning-set fires to burn in designated wilderness areas. They discover that fires in the undergrowth of pine forests burn slowly without damage to larger trees, and that animals are not harmed. The U.S. Forest Service and other land management agencies begin letting some natural fires burn in wilderness areas. Human-caused fires or fires that threaten homes or buildings are fought as before.

**1973:** The Legislature passes the Forest Practices Act, which is signed into law in 1974 by Governor Dan Evans. The act is designed to regulate all forest practices on state and private land, including logging and its impacts on the environment. An 11-member Forest Practices Board is established to develop the new regulations, which are intended to be completed and in effect by January 1, 1975, but numerous technical questions require at least nine drafts of the regulations to be written. The process continues into early 1976, with final regulations effective on July 1, 1976.

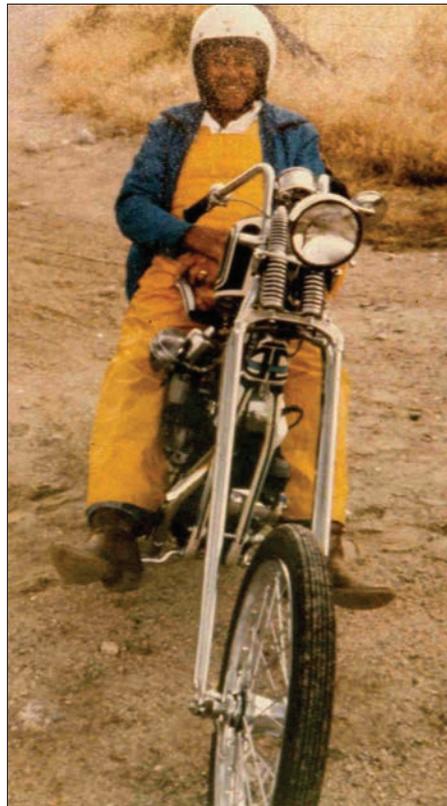
**January 1975:** WFPA opens a branch office in Olympia, with a goal of more effectively representing its interests in the state capital on issues involving forest land. This is necessary because of dramatically increased governmental action on both the legislative and administrative levels of state and local governmental agencies during the preceding few years. The new office allows the issues and programs that involve WFPA to become more visible and understood by state legislators, administrators, and their staffs in the state capital.

**November 1975:** WFPA again restructures. Five committees are created to more effectively deal with the major issues facing WFPA. These five committees are (1) Forest Management; (2) Land Use; (3) Forest Taxation; (4) Governmental Affairs; and (5) Public Information.

**July 1, 1976:** Washington’s new Forest Practices Act takes effect. This is the first major change in the regulation of logging since the original 1946 act.

Compliance with the 1946 act had been sporadic, and the new act is designed to guarantee sustainable yields for state, municipal, and private forests while protecting other resources. Since 1976, the rules in the act have evolved as the result of other scientific research, public interest, and other regulations.

**1977:** Stewart “Stu” Bledsoe becomes WFPA Executive Director. WFPA conducts regional meetings for loggers featuring the new hose torpedo. This device enables a logging crew to rapidly string out fire hose using the log yarding cable system. WFPA continues to increase its public information programs with a series of new programs and publications. WFPA also begins to implement Project Learning Tree on a large-scale basis in 1977. Project Learning Tree is a program designed to teach teachers how to teach forestry topics. This program will grow in leaps and bounds during the 1980s.



*Into this political cauldron rode Stewart Bledsoe, “Stu” to all who knew him, who served as WFPA’s Executive Director from 1977 until his untimely death in 1988.*

**1979:** WFPA organizes and staffs an informal organization known as the Washington State Pest Management Alliance (WSPMA), which is created to address growing public concern surrounding

the use of herbicides and to promote the safe use of herbicides. The alliance becomes a separate entity in 1981, and in 1984 is renamed the Washington Pest Management Council.

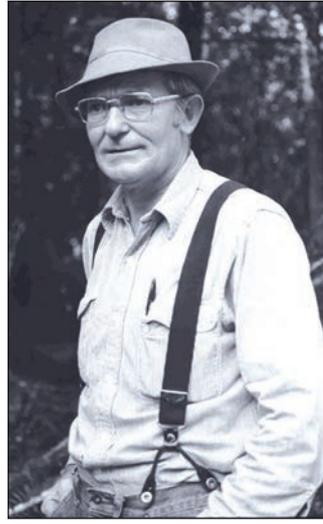
**1979:** Late in the year, environmentalists bring a lawsuit in the name of “2.1 Million Acres of Trees, State Trust Land, Water, Wildlife, and Ecosystems et al.” (1980 WFPA Annual Report, p. 19) attacking the Department of Natural Resources’ environmental-impact statement on its forestland-management program for the decade, as well as the Board of Natural Resources’ interpretation of its duties in managing state trust lands. Recognizing that the suit has considerable potential to affect forest management, WFPA and other associations intervene in the suit, which is settled in September 1982.

**1981:** WFPA continues to take an active role in legislative affairs. In 1981 the forest practices exemptions that were previously in the Forest Practices Act (but challenged by a lawsuit) are placed in the State Environmental Policy Act statute as the result of passage of House Bill 372. This particular bill has a “sunset clause” and is set to expire in June 1983. Two years later a permanent bill is passed.

**1982:** WFPA celebrates its 75th year beginning in April 1982. The 1982 WFPA Annual Report notes that, particularly in the 25 years since 1957, WFPA has grown from a landowner’s cooperative that fought fires to a multi-faceted organization that deals in five broad areas: forest management, forest taxation, land use, governmental affairs, and public affairs. At the end of 1982 WFPA members own more than 5 million acres of private commercial forestland in Washington, or slightly more than half of such lands in the state. In 1982, forest products represent 21 percent of manufacturing jobs in Washington, second only to aerospace; illustrating the continuing importance of WFPA’s cooperative actions to protect the interests of forest landowners.

**April 1983:** A permanent bill is passed by the Legislature that exempts three classes (designated Class I, II, and III) of forest practices from the State Environmental Policy Act.

**1984:** WFPA’s Governmental Affairs Committee aggressively and successfully lobbies to get a new timber-tax bill



*In 1985 Ralph Flowers developed the Supplemental Bear Feeding Program, which continues today.*

passed. The three main components of the bill are: (1) Reduction of the timber excise tax rate from 6.5 percent to 5 percent over a three-year period beginning in July 1985; (2) Phasing out the 1931 Reforestation Act and reclassifying the reforestation lands under the 1971 law, with the yield tax phased down from 12.5 percent to 5 percent by 1994; and (3) Redistribution of timber-tax revenues, with local governments guaranteed a large share of the revenue generated from private timber.

**1985:** The Supplemental Bear Feeding Program begins. This is part of the Animal Damage Control Program implemented by WFPA to curb damage to trees from feeding animals. Black bears, in particular, strip off the bark of prime, maturing trees in the early spring in search of nourishment before berries and other food becomes available. The Supplemental Bear Feeding Program minimizes bear damage to trees by providing special food pellets to these animals. The program proves successful and grows rapidly: In its 10th year (1994), more than 310,000 pounds of pellets are used to feed bears at nearly 600 feeding stations scattered throughout Western Washington.

**1986:** WFPA begins using computer software as part of its environmental education program. The Communications Committee of WFPA also develops a public-opinion research program of focus groups and a statewide survey, to help it plan future activities by obtaining additional information on the depth and strength of public awareness on recreation and wildlife-management issues on forest land.

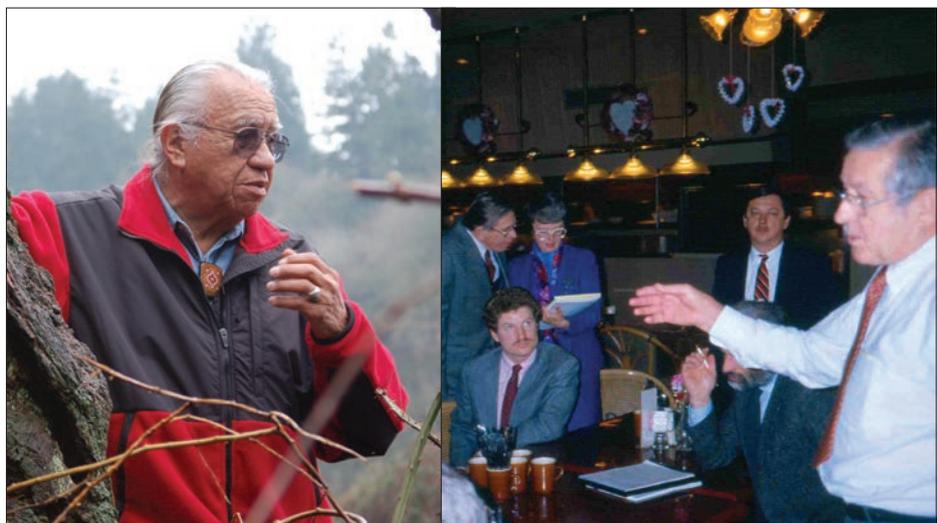
**July 1986:** Acting on an idea first suggested earlier in the year by Billy Frank, Jr. of the Nisqually Tribe, the Northwest Renewable Resources Center convenes a conference in Port Ludlow to consider alternative dispute resolution for forest practices. Fifty individuals, representing the timber industry, tribes, environmentalists, and natural resources agencies, meet for three days. This conference becomes known as “Port Ludlow II” and is so successful that the group asks the Forest Practices Board to delay its new rules so the group can work out its own plan; the ultimate goal is to resolve forest-practices issues through negotiation instead of litigation. The meeting will eventually result in the Timber Fish Wildlife Agreement.

**February 17, 1987:** After six months and 60 meetings between various parties noted above, the Timber Fish Wildlife

(TFW) Agreement is announced. The goals of the agreement are to both provide for the environment and for a healthy forest industry. Changes in rules are negotiated among interested parties instead of argued before a commission or a court. A three-year moratorium on new regulations allows the group to formulate its own proposals, and although TFW is not officially implemented in 1987, it receives approval from both the Legislature and the Forest Practices Board. Each logging site is dealt with individually based on the best science at the time (adaptive management), rather than on broad and complex regulations. Both fish-bearing streams and the upland watersheds that support them are protected. The Timber Fish Wildlife Agreement becomes a model for Washington’s private landowners to resolve natural-resource issues. State and private natural-resource managers statewide working with treaty Indian tribes and environmental groups begin implementing the agreement in 1988.

**1987:** Cooperative Monitoring Evaluation and Research (CMER) forms as a part of the Timber Fish Wildlife Agreement. Under TFW, CMER’s tasks are to provide sound research on the impacts of forest management to public resources.

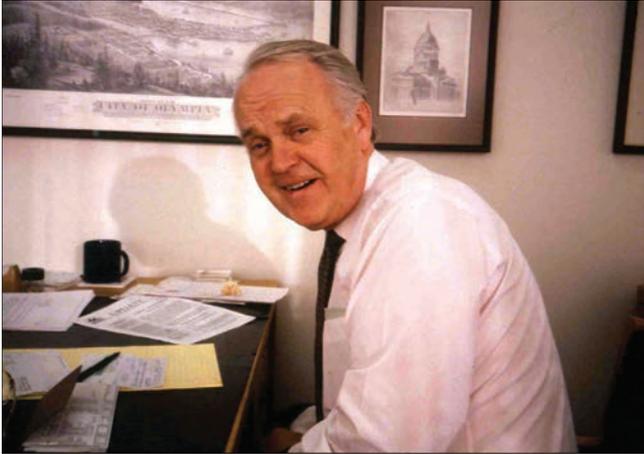
**1988:** Stewart “Stu” Bledsoe, WFPA executive director from 1977 until 1988, dies on September 6, 1988. Bledsoe is remembered for leading WFPA’s smooth transition from what had been largely a fire-protection association into an association more able to represent its members on a full spectrum of issues



*Bledsoe (right) and Billy Frank, Jr. (left), of the Nisqually Tribe, are remembered as leaders in the pioneering effort that led to the Timber Fish Wildlife Agreement.*

confronting forest landowners that had arisen in the 1970s and 1980s.

**1988:** WFPA begins sponsoring the Tree Farm Program and in 1989 will launch a project designed to help tree farmers, foresters, and teachers join together to educate students about tree farming and forest management. This project



*Executive Director Bill Jacobs.*

will continue to grow into the 1990s. William “Bill” Jacobs becomes WFPA Executive Director. He will serve in this role until his retirement from WFPA in 1996.

**1989:** WFPA reaches an agreement with the Department of Natural Resources to limit weekend slash burning from July to October in response to concerns about smoke pollution. In return, the DNR agrees to increased flexibility regarding slash burning during the spring burning season and on weekdays during the summer.

**June 26, 1990:** The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service lists the northern spotted owl as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act, resulting from the widespread loss of the owl’s habitat due in part to timber harvesting. In 1991 the Department of Natural Resources issues Spotted Owl Memo No. 3, which sets aside large areas of land for owl habitat. This has an enormous impact on landowners. Timber harvest levels are reduced as much as 80 percent across Washington, Oregon, and California, and “at this time confusion reigns,” says the *1991 WFPA Annual Report*.

**1991:** WFPA implements a significant public-education campaign to better inform the public of what it does and to avoid understandings that can lead

to unnecessary restrictions on WFPA operations. Television, radio, and print programs are distributed to the public throughout the state during the 1990s.

**October 16–21, 1991:** Wildland fires erupt in Spokane on October 16, killing one person and destroying

114 homes in what becomes known as the Spokane Firestorm. By October 19, Spokane is surrounded on three sides by fires. The fires are briefly contained before flaring up again on October 21, and it takes more than 4,000 firefighters to again contain the fires. This disaster and the Oakland Hills Fire the same weekend in Oakland, California, demonstrate the

hazards of urban encroachment on wildlands. As a result of the Spokane Firestorm, the Legislature passes a law in 1992 expanding the mobilization of resources during large fires, including the National Guard. The law also provides for the reimbursement of agencies called in to assist in large fires and for agencies whose own resources are exhausted.



*In 1990 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service listed the northern spotted owl as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.*



**1992:** The Forest Practices Board adopts new forestry rules that limit the size of logging clearcuts, establish a rate-of-harvest monitoring rule, and establish new protection for wetlands. The rules require significant changes in forest practices aimed at providing additional wildlife habitat. WFPA participates with Native American tribes and state agencies to bring about these new rules. The board also adopts a scientific methodology for examining the environmental health of watersheds and addressing the cumulative effect of forest practices.

**September 1993:** WFPA prevails in a ruling in the Thurston County Superior Court regarding the spotted owl. In 1992, the Forest Practices Board adopted a rule (developed by WFPA and others) that avoided additional environmental review for timber harvesting outside a 500-acre protection zone surrounding an owl nest. Washington’s Department of Wildlife did not adopt the rule, and sued the Department of Natural Resources to prevent implementation. WFPA joined in the lawsuit in order to protect its member interests, and in September 1993, a Thurston County Superior Court judge rules that the 500-acre rule is valid.

**1994:** The Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) goes into effect. The goal of the NWFP is to adopt coordinated man-



*In 1997 negotiations began to develop a cooperative, state-based plan for improving fish habitat and water quality protection on forest land. Under the direction of WFPA Executive Director Bill Wilkerson, this led to the Forests & Fish Agreement, which was signed by Washington Governor Gary Locke in June 1999.*

agement direction for the lands administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the United States Department of the Interior (USDI) Bureau of Land Management, and to adopt complementary approaches by other federal agencies within the range of the northern spotted owl. The management of these public lands must meet dual needs: the need for forest habitat and the need for forest products. At the state level, the Forest Practices Board negotiates with tribes, environmentalists, and landowners to develop a cooperative strategy for private forestlands to protect the spotted owl.

**July–August 1994:** On July 24, lightning ignites a forest fire in the Wenatchee National Forest at Tye Creek that burns for 33 days before it is contained. Other fires in the region on Hatchery Creek and Rat Creek consume another 40,000 acres. The Tye Creek fire is one of the largest forest fires in Washington in the twentieth century.

**1996:** William “Bill” Wilkerson joins WFPA as Executive Director and will lead for the next decade, before retiring from WFPA in December 2006. WFPA establishes a presence on the Internet with a home page and a news page, complete with an email address for readers to contact the Association, at [www.wfpa.org](http://www.wfpa.org).

**July 1, 1996:** New forest-practices rules regarding the spotted owl take effect. The rules contain provisions for assessing potential impact to the owls that might result from forest practices on non-federal lands. The rules establish “critical habitat state,” provide definitions of suitable spotted owl habitat, and define key landscapes (called “Spotted Owl Special Emphasis Areas”) where owl conservation is important. The rules contain language requiring their periodic assessment.

**1997:** WFPA creates the Eastside Forest Management Committee. This committee focuses on landowner issues east of the Cascade Crest, and forms as the result of requests from members in Central and Eastern Washington, who want a separate committee to insure that the differences east of the Cascades in forest environment, harvest methods, stream-side characteristics, soils, and precipitation are taken into account in WFPA discussions and decision-making.

**1998:** The Legislature passes a number of bills regarding salmon management and salmon recovery, which is WFPA’s highest priority area in 1998. These bills support WFPA’s efforts in state-based planning for salmon habitat protection through the Timber Fish Wildlife

forum. The bills include: (1) Salmon Habitat Restoration, which is a comprehensive measure for voluntary salmon habitat restoration; (2) Steelhead Recovery Pilot, which is a pilot program to address steelhead endangered species listings in Southwestern Washington; and (3) Fish Enhancement Projects, which facilitates the removal of fish passage barriers and encourages other fish enhancement efforts.

**June 7, 1999:** Washington Governor Gary Locke signs the Forests & Fish Agreement, which the Legislature passed on May 19, 1999. This is arguably the most significant achievement of resource protection on forest lands created during the 1990s, and is the result of an intense two-year effort by WFPA and other interested parties, working through the TFW forum, to respond to issues surrounding fish habitat and water quality protection mandated by the federal Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts, and to develop a state-based, cooperative plan. The law



increases buffers of trees alongside 60,000 miles of streams on 9.3 million acres of state and private forestland, improves road-maintenance standards and increases protection for steep and unstable slopes. Permanent forest practices rules will be adopted in 2001.

**2001:** The Forest Practices Board adopts permanent rules to implement the Forests & Fish Agreement. More than 1,760 public comments are received regarding the new rules; 71 percent of these comments are favorable. In July 2001, the Forest Practices Board reorganizes and formalizes Cooperative Monitoring Evaluation and Research (CMER), giving it the role to advance science needed to support the adaptive management program.

**July 10, 2001:** Four U.S. Forest Service firefighters die while battling the Thirty Mile Fire in Okanogan County. There are no towns or structures near the fire, but under Forest Service policy, managers are obliged to fight the fire because it is started by human activity. Naturally occurring fires, such as those started by lightning, are allowed to burn. The incident causes a rethinking of Forest Service firefighting policies, including not fighting a fire if it is not safe to do so.



On June 5, 2006 Washington Governor Christine Gregoire signed the Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan into law.

**2003:** WFPA establishes the Pacific Education Institute (PEI), a non-profit organization that promotes using environmental education as the basis for teaching, and supports teachers who are working to incorporate environmental education into the classroom. Using this program, students apply math, science, the arts, and social studies skills to field investigations both outdoors and in their classrooms.

**December 3, 2003:** President George W. Bush signs the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, designed to reduce the risk of catastrophic forest fires by thinning brush and dense undergrowth in forested areas.

**June 5, 2006:** The Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is signed into law. This is a 50-year contract between the state and the federal government that assures private forestry landowners in Washington state that their practices meet the requirements for aquatic species that are set forth in the Endangered Species Act. The plan covers 60,000 miles of stream habitat running through more than 9 million acres of private and state forestland. The HCP also requires adaptive management to improve forest-management decisions and on-the-ground practices. This allows for forest-practices rules to change based on peer-reviewed scientific need. As of the end of 2007, Washington is the only state to have achieved national recognition from the federal government that its state forest-practices system meets the Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts.

forest landowners (including WFPA members) are required to improve forest roads under a Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan in order to protect public resources, including water, fish and resource habitat. Improving roads by reducing or eliminating runoff and sediment being delivered into streams provides new and improved habitat for fish. By late 2007, nearly 60,000 miles of road have been improved in Washington's forests and more than 1,800 barriers to fish passage have been removed, opening up almost 1,000 miles of stream habitat.

*WFPA celebrated its centennial in 2008 under the administration of Mark Doumit, Executive Director, and Toby Murray, President. Sam Reed presented WFPA with a century certificate.*

**2006:** Washington's Court of Appeals, in response to two legal actions, confirms that Class I, II, and III forest practices are exempt from review under the State Environmental Policy Act. This decision, upon appeal, is confirmed by the state Supreme Court in February 2008. Mark Doumit becomes Executive Director in November 2006.

**2007:** As part of the Forests & Fish Agreement, private



**2008:** In March, Washington Governor Christine Gregoire proclaims March 11, 2008, as "Washington Forest Protection Association's 100th Anniversary Celebration," and on April 6, 2008, the Washington Forest Protection Association officially reaches the 100-year mark and begins its second century.



## Sources

Washington Forest Fire Association (WFFA) Annual Reports, 1908–1957

Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA) Annual Reports, 1958–2007

Charles S. Cowan, *The Enemy Is Fire!* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1961)

Harold Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 227

*HistoryLink.org Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History*, “Forest Fire in Washington State,” “Yacolt Burn, largest fire in recorded state history, rages from September 11 to 13, 1902,” “Timber companies organize Washington Forest Fire Association on April 6, 1908,” “The ‘Great Blowdown’ strikes the Washington coast on January 29, 1921,” “Weyerhaeuser dedicates the nation’s first tree farm near Montesano on June 21, 1941,” “Japanese incendiary balloons land in Washington beginning on February 12, 1945,” “Forest Practices Act requires reforestation of logged lands on January 1, 1946,” “Forest fire burns 33,000 acres and 32 buildings in Forks on September 20, 1951,” “Washington legislature creates the Department of Natural Resources in 1957,” “Columbus Day windstorm disaster blows Olympic Peninsula and Puget Sound on October 12, 1962,” “Federal Judge George Boldt issues historic ruling affirming Native American treaty fishing rights on February 12, 1974,” “New forest practices rules take effect on July 1, 1976,” “Timber Fish Wildlife Agreement offers new way to manage state forests on August 22, 1986,” “Spokane wildland fires kill one person and destroy 114 homes beginning October 16, 1991,” “Tye Creek Fire burns 135,000 acres for 33 days north of Wenatchee, beginning July 24, 1994,” “Four firefighters die in forest fire in Okanogan County on July 10, 2001” (all by David Wilma), (<http://www.historylink.org>)

“WFPA 100th Anniversary 1908–2008,” and “What is the Timber Fish Wildlife (TFW) Agreement?” Washington Forest Protection Association website (<http://www.wfpa.org>)

“Boldt Phase II Decision, Lessons for the Forestland Owners” and “Catastrophic Wildfire: Active forest management reduces the risk.” WFPA brochures

Cindy Mitchell, email to Phil Dougherty, July 8, 2008

Proclamation, “Washington Forest Protection Association 100th Anniversary Celebration,” WFPA website (<http://www.wfpa.org/resource/news/governors%20proclamation.pdf>)

“Endangered Species Act of 1973,” and “Northern Spotted Owl,” U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service website (<http://www.fws.gov>)

“Northwest Forest Plan Overview,” Regional Ecosystem Office website (<http://www.reo.gov>)

“The 1910 Fire,” Idaho Forest Products Commission website (<http://www.idahoforests.org>)

“Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act),” University of New Mexico School of Law Institute of Public Law, Federal Wildlife and Related Laws Handbook (<http://ipl.unm.edu/cwl/fedbook/fwpc.html>)

“Final Briefing Report to the Washington State Forest Practices Board regarding Spotted Owl Status and Forest Practices Rules,” Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife website ([http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/research/papers/spotted\\_owl/forest\\_practices.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/research/papers/spotted_owl/forest_practices.htm))

“The Growth Management Act,” Washington State Growth Management Hearing Boards website (<http://www.gmhb.wa.gov>)

“State Environmental Policy Act” (<http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Environment/sepa.aspx>)

American Tree Farm System (<http://www.treefarmssystem.org>)

Guide to the Louis Linden Madsen Papers (<http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu>)

Pacific Education Institute website (<http://www.pacificeducationinstitute.org>)

Preliminary Guide to the Keep Washington Green Records (<http://www.lib.washington.edu>)

U.S. Forest Service website (<http://www.fs.fed.us>)

Webster Forest Nursery website (<http://www3.wadnr.gov>).



Washington Forest Protection Association  
724 Columbia St. NW, Suite 250  
Olympia, WA 98501

Phone: (360) 352-1500  
Fax: (360) 352-4621  
[www.wfpa.org](http://www.wfpa.org)