



## **SALVAGE OF TIMBER**

Before the ashes of the great fire were cool the Forest Service started action toward securing information for the salvage of as much timber as possible. It was recognized immediately that a very high percentage of the timber was so inaccessible that salvage was hopeless, but there were many bodies of good timber, particularly white pine, which offered possibilities.

Timber survey crews and appraisers were organized as rapidly as possible, particularly through 1911, and available chances were cruised, appraised and advertised as fast as they could be reached. The existing lumber companies in Idaho and Western Montana were anxious to do their part, and many of them transferred their operations entirely to fire-killed timber. The major salvage operations were as follows:

### **COEUR D'ALENE**

The Rose Lake Lumber Company logged a large amount of white pine on the Upper North Fork from McPherson's up into Independence and Trail Creeks. The timber was driven down river. The Stack-Gibbs Lumber Company operated on lower Big Creek and adjacent river areas. There were also many smaller sales made along the North Fork.

### **ST. JOE**

The Milwaukee Lumber Company had started a railroad into Big Creek before the fire. This railroad was extended and that company logged Big Creek until 1915. That company also logged timber in the Little North Fork, including Loop Creek; McGoldrick logged Slate Creek, and Bogle and Callahan the upper Little North Fork.

### **LOLO (ST. REGIS DRAINAGE, NOW ON CABINET)**

The Polleys Lumber Company logged Rainy Creek and the S. Regis River up as far as Denniemore Creek. They also logged Packer Creek and Brimstone. The Mann Lumber Company took out all the timber from the West and Middle Forks of Big Creek, including considerable green timber. Westfall had a mill setting at Borax and took several million from the upper part of the St. Regis River, largely spruce, which was very severely burned.

## **CABINET**

A number of units near Noxon were logged after the fire, including Pilgrim Creek and Bull River. These were mostly small or medium sales.

There is no clear record of the total amount of fire-killed timber salvaged. Most of what was salvaged was taken out in 1911 to 1914. The total regional cut for these four years was 539 million. Possibly two-thirds of this was fire-killed or fire-damaged timber, which would make the salvage about 300 million out of a total estimated loss of National Forest timber of 5 to 6 billion feet, considerably less than 10 percent.

Most of the operators in fire-killed timber made very little profit. Some of them lost money. For one thing, the Forest Service was somewhat too reluctant to let them skim the cream and take the best timber first. Some good timber was lost while they were cutting less good timber. It is evident that from this experience in salvaging fire-damaged timber there should be little restriction in getting the best first.

The burned timber commenced to check and blue almost immediately. The spruce went first, and by 1912 it was very badly checked. White pine was logged up to 1914, and a little in 1915, though only the largest trees were then merchantable. Fir and larch lasted the longest and some of it was logged for mine timber up to 1918. Very few cedar poles were salvaged, but post timber is still being cut from 1910 burns.

*Excerpt from the collection of "When The Mountains Roared", (page 46-48) USDA Forest Service*