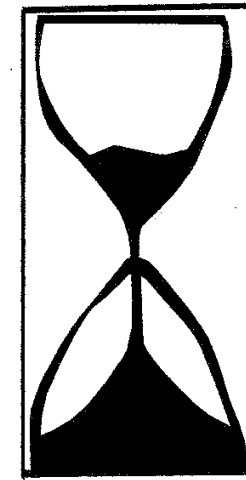
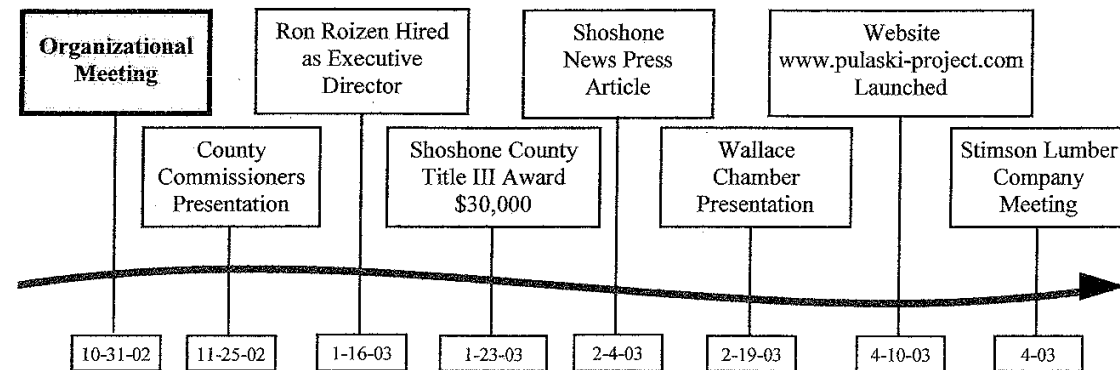
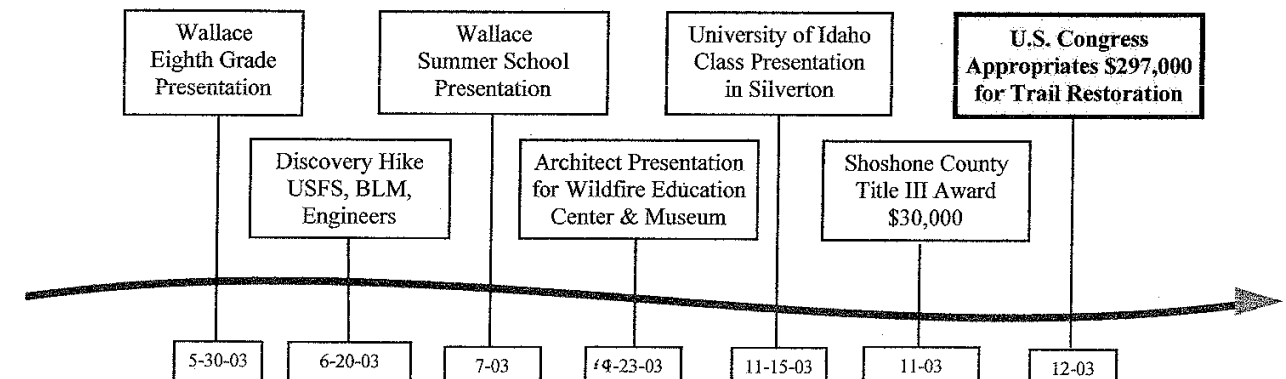


Pulaski Project Accomplishments & Activities Timeline

2002 - 2003



and News & Media Coverage of the Great Fire of 1910





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50 CENTS

Group works to save trail, promote wildfire education

By CAROLINE LOBSINGER
Staff writer

WALLACE — It was 1910, and district ranger Edward Pulaski and his men were caught by the flames of a raging forest fire.

Thinking quickly, Pulaski retreated with his crew to two old mine tunnels south of Wallace up Placer Creek — saving 37 of the 43-man crew.

Today, the Greater Wallace Community Development Corp. is working to save the trail and create a national wildfire education center and museum in Wallace. The group recently received funding from the county to study the project's feasibility.

"Wallace's experience in the great

1910 fire as well as the well-known story of Ranger Ed Pulaski's brave rescue of his firefighting crew — securing them in the Nicholson mine — makes Wallace an ideal site for the new institution," says Jim See, the project's creator and director.

The project, See believes, will make a valuable addition Wallace's array of historical and education visitor attractions.

One element of the project will be to upgrade the trail from Moon Pass Road — starting roughly across the street from the U.S. Forest Service memorial markers commemorating Pulaski and the fire — to the Nicholson adit.

See first hiked the trail years ago

when a friend took him to see the Nicholson mine, referred to by many as the "Pulaski Tunnel."

"Over the years, we've hiked it a couple of times each summer," See said. "Each year, it looks a little more like it's going to cave in and be lost. This place needs to be saved."

Signs commemorating the history of the site would be placed along the trail as well as at the tunnel itself, said Ron Roizen, who is working with the group on the project. In addition, the portal would be stabilized so hikers could glimpse where the firefighters were saved.

Beyond the trail, the group hopes to work with the U.S. Forest Service to create a national wildfire education

center, with education and training for both the public and firefighters as well as pay homage to firefighters.

"At this point, everything is a dream, a vision," See said.

The project is in the initial stages, and all ideas and input from the public are encouraged and welcomed, he said.

A grant application for the "Pulaski Trail" portion of the project was sent last week to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, where it is presently under review. The program for recreational trail development calls for local public notice and support/comment for proposed projects.

See TRAIL, Page 3

TRAIL

Continued from Page 1

"We welcome everyone in Wallace or elsewhere in the area to e-mail, s-mail, or telephone their support and/or

comments on the Pulaski Trail project," See said.

E-mails may be sent to roizen2@imbris.com; telephone 556-0288; and regular mail to Pulaski Trail Project, P.O. Box 496, Wallace, ID 83873.

Excursion along Pulaski Trail discovers plenty to be excited about

By JIM SEE
Pulaski Project president

Representatives of the timber industry, the mining industry, the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, the water district, Wallace's Mining Museum, and the Pulaski Project — 16 persons in all — gathered together on Friday, June 20, at the 1910 fire monument on Moon Pass Road outside of Wallace.

The party included a 9-year-old girl, Hannah, brought along by her dad, Forest Service hydrologist, Rob Davies.

The occasion was a hike of discovery up the "Pulaski Trail," along the West Fork of Placer Creek, to the historic Nicholson adit (AKA the "Pulaski Tunnel.") Ranger Ed Pulaski saved 39 of the men in his crew by holding them at gunpoint inside the adit during the great 1910 fire.

The Pulaski Project, which organized the hike, will need the approval and assistance of a variety of parties and agencies to upgrade of the trail and secure of the adit.

The four-mile round-trip hike is one of the initial steps in creating a coordinated effort



—Photo courtesy PULASKI PROJECT

Hike group assembles at 1910 fire monument for pre-hike photo.

behind the project.

The Pulaski Trail Project seeks to develop a fully accessible, world-class hiking trail to the Pulaski Tunnel site. The aim is to add to the area's historical and recreational resources as well as to honor the Pulaski story.

The Pulaski Project is also a key element in a larger endeavor, the development of a

National Wildfire Education Center and Museum in Wallace or Silverton. The proposed center will serve to link the Pulaski story to the daunting challenges facing forest management and wildfire issues in 21st century America.

The mixed group participating in the hike aimed to assess the feasibility and practicality of the project — each from its own

organizational angle. Footbridges, trail widening and other engineering will be accomplished by the trail project.

Issues relating to land ownership, easements, water quality, environmental impact, engineering, and even the welfare of any adit-dwelling bats need to be addressed.

The trail, which is in badly

need of maintenance and repair, is a beautiful but difficult hike into the forest. It follows the waterfalls and cascades up West Fork of Placer Creek and through a variety of obstacles. At points, large cedar snags that were burned in the fire of 1910 populate obstruct the trail. Along the way, remains of the War Eagle Mine and other historic mining activity can be seen.

The public is strongly discouraged from hiking it until improvements can be made.

Professor Stephen J. Pyne published a new history of the great 1910 fire and its impact on the U.S. Forest Service and American attitudes toward wildfire in 2001. Pyne's book, *The Year of the Fires*, described the adit site well:

The great fire caused about thirteen and a half million 1910 dollars damage. Three million acres of private and national forest land burned, totaling seven and a half billion board feet of timber — enough, one source says, to construct 50,000 four-bedroom houses. The cost of fighting the fire to the government was \$800,000.

Fatalities numbered at least 85 including 78 employed fire

fighters and seven civilians. Remains of the fallen firefighters are buried in the cemeteries of Wallace and St. Maries.

At the adit, hikers contemplated the ordeal 1910 firefighters must have endured and the sacrifice of the six members of Pulaski's crew who didn't make it.

A hiker noted that he could feel the presence of the ghosts in the canyon.

Jim See, the president of the Wildfire Center, said, "This hike is the first step in restoring a national treasure. We plan upgrade this trail so that it can be enjoyed by interested persons of all ages."

By the hike's end, it appeared that all who made the trek were keen on moving the project forward.

(Elsewhere, support is building for the project as well. Sen. Larry Craig plans to introduce a special appropriation to fund the bulk of the trail-upgrade in this Congress. Sen. Mike Crapo and U.S. Rep. Butch Otter have both expressed strong support. The Idaho Community Foundation has awarded a small grant to help develop historical signage for the upgraded trail.)

Restoration of trail is reconnection to past



By DAVID BOND
Special to the Shoshone
News-Press

WALLACE — A grant of \$300,000 to begin work to restore the Pulaski Trail in Wallace was inserted this week into the 2004 Interior Department budget by Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho.

Edward C. Pulaski, relative of a Polish count who served under Gen. George Washington in the Continental Army, was one of North Idaho's first Forest Service district rangers. He scouted and surveyed much of Shoshone County, naming many of its lakes and peaks after family members.

"This is a fitting tribute to a courageous firefighter and forest ranger, and we very much appreciate Sen. Craig's support of our endeavor," said Mullan High School District counselor and schoolteacher Jim See, who is spearheading the trail restoration project.

Said Craig: "Restoring the trail to the Pulaski Tunnel will help remind people about the catastrophic fires that have ravaged our forests, both here in Idaho and the rest of the country. Combined with the education



Edward C. Pulaski was one of North Idaho's first Forest Service district rangers

efforts of the National Wildfire Education Center and Museum, perhaps more people will understand the need for healthy forests to prevent catastrophic fires.

"Once again, Wallace is at the nexus of a change in national forest fire policy," Craig said Friday.

In July 1910, the largest known forest fires ever to strike the northern Rockies began burning and by August that year were raging through Idaho, Washington,

Montana, British Columbia and Alberta.

Pulaski, 42 years old and just two years on the job as Wallace District Ranger, was leading a crew of 45 firefighters when on Aug. 20 a half-dozen separate fires joined forces in what the Forest Service calls "The Big Blowup." Hurricane- and tornado-force winds were generated by the inferno. Five Montana towns were destroyed and 85 people were killed.

Barely ahead of the advancing flames and hemmed in by a backfire set in Wallace, Pulaski led his crew up a trail to an abandoned mine tunnel belonging to the Nicholson Mine just south of Wallace on the road to Moon Pass.

According to Forest Service records, Pulaski was able to save all but six of his men holed up in the mine, but had to hold several of them in the tunnel at gunpoint while the fire rampaged around them.

Schoolteacher See, a devout hiker and local historian, decided a decade ago that the barely accessible route to the mine where Pulaski holed up with his men needed to be preserved

for posterity. His effort gained momentum in the community, garnering support from Mullan School Superintendent Robin Stanley and then from a host of Shoshone County residents.

"The fact that Sen. Craig and Congress are willing to support our efforts is gratifying to me. It means somebody out there appreciates our history with wildfires and forest fires, and is willing to acknowledge the efforts of those people caught in the

crossfire," See said.

Craig said of Wallace's response to the 1910 fire, when firefighters were reduced at one point to fighting the 1910 blaze with beer to save their city,

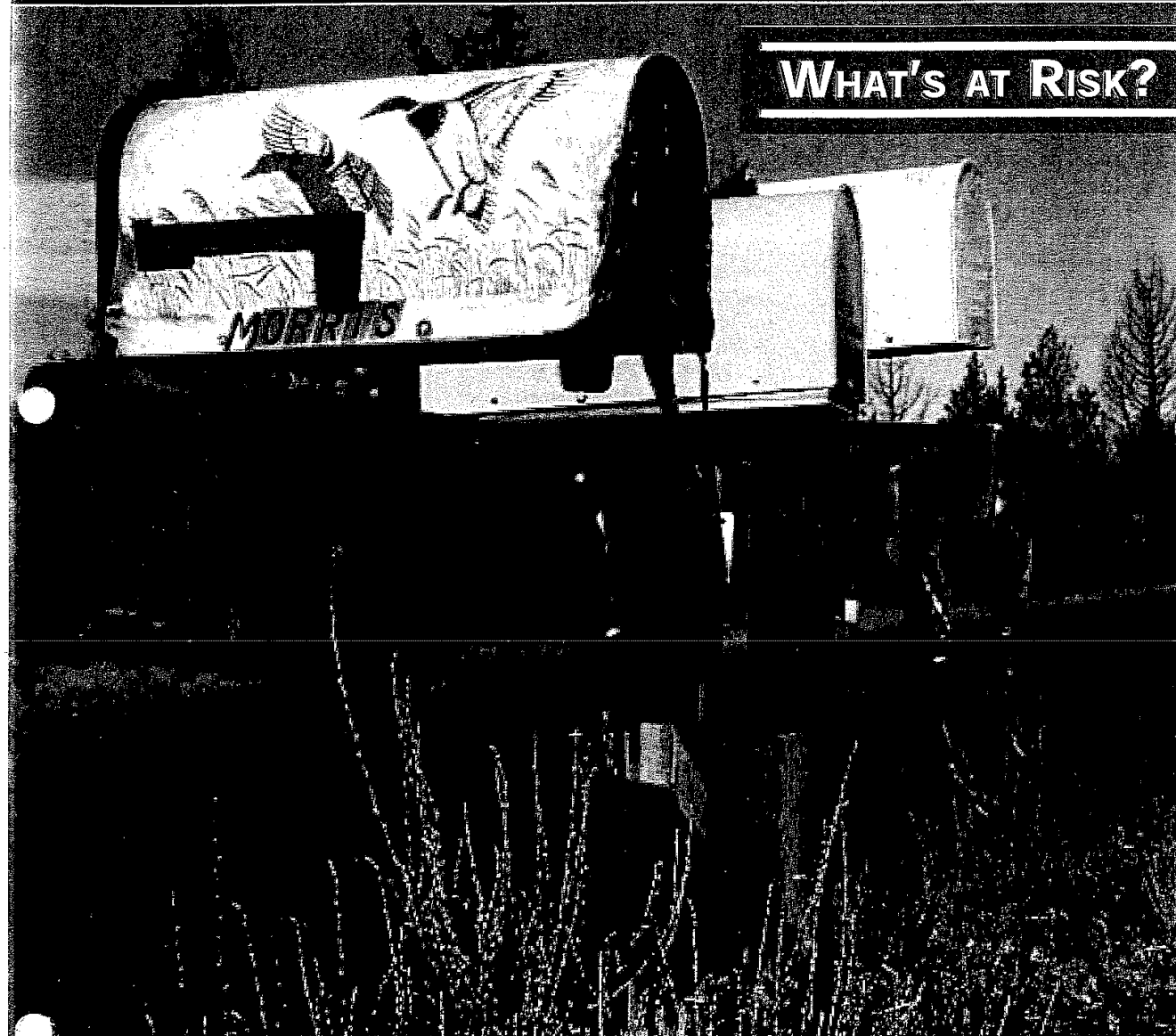
"You would be hard pressed to find a town more ravaged than Wallace has been from forest fires," Craig said. "Yet, they have always persevered, and that history has taught us many lessons and helped shape national forest policy."

Fire Management *today*

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WHAT'S AT RISK?



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BIG ED PULASKI AND THE BIG BLOWUP



Gerald W. Williams

There are many stories about the Big Blowup of August 20–21, 1910, when a massive million-acre firestorm charred vast areas of national forest and remote towns in western Montana and northern Idaho. More than 85 lives were lost. The Montana towns of DeBorgia, Grand Forks, Haugan, Henderson, and Taft were completely destroyed.

In Idaho, the flames swept around the frontier town of Wallace, destroying many homes and buildings. Wallace sits in Silver Valley, a peaceful valley 40 miles (64 k) long, east of Coeur d'Alene and west of Lookout Pass. The community was very small in 1910; even today, there are less than a thousand residents.

Wallace was home to Ed Pulaski, whose tale is the most enduring story associated with the Big Blowup. In the summer of 1910, Pulaski was 42 years old. A native of Ohio, he had wandered west at age 16 to work in the mills and mines of Montana and Idaho. In 1910, he was barely 2 years into his Forest Service career as the district ranger on the Wallace Ranger District, Coeur d'Alene National Forest.

"Big Ed" was a physically imposing man. Like others in the USDA Forest Service, Pulaski was leading a crew of firefighters against the Great Fires of 1910, which hit the Northern Rockies beginning in July. "By August 19," wrote Charles K. McHarg (1931), "Pulaski had about 120 men on the St. Joe/Coeur

"Some men went berserk, clamoring over the prostrate bodies, choking, gasping. Others praying. Others laughing."

—William Chance, survivor in the Pulaski mine

d'Alene divide working on fires in the two Big Creeks." The stage was set for an encounter between a massive, uncontrollable forest fire and the fortitude and determination of a small group of firefighters trying to save their lives.

From the Horse's Mouth

In 1923, the journal *American Forests and Forest Life* held an essay contest asking subscribers to write about their most exciting experience as a forest ranger. Pulaski submitted his story "Surrounded by Forest Fires," which was printed in the journal's August issue (see the sidebar). After that, he "never wrote another word about the Great Fires or, for that matter, spoke of them further in any formal way," noted the fire historian Stephen J. Pyne (2001).

Pulaski told a simple story. On August 20, there was "a terrific hurricane" that was "so strong it almost lifted men out of their saddles."* The winds carried fire for miles, joining the fires, which "swept with the roar of a thousand freight trains." The intense smoke and heat made it difficult to breathe.

Fear became a factor. Men packing in supplies to the firefighters simply dumped their loads and fled back to town. With "the whole world" seemingly ablaze, many firefighters "thought that it really was the end of the world." Pulaski abandoned all hope of fighting the fires and simply tried to get his crew to safety.

He managed to gather 45 men. Barely making himself heard "above

PULASKI'S STORY

Editor's note: Ed Pulaski formally told his story only once, in the August 1923 edition of American Forests and Forest Life. The following excerpt illustrates his simple, straightforward style.

On August 20 a terrific hurricane broke over the mountains. It picked up fires and carried them for miles. The wind was so strong it almost lifted men out of their saddles, and the canyons seemed to act as chimneys, through which the wind and fires swept with the roar of a thousand freight trains. The smoke and heat became so intense that it was difficult to breathe. The men who were packing in supplies refused to go to their destinations, dumped their loads, and fled back to Wallace. ...

Jerry Williams is the national historian for the USDA Forest Service in Washington, D.C.

* Early fire crews often used horses and mules to reach remote fires and resupply firefighters in the backcountry.

INVENTING THE PULASKI

Gerald W. Williams

Most firefighters know that the pulaski firefighting tool was named for Ed Pulaski, the hero of the Big Blowup of 1910. Pulaski, a jack-of-all-trades, is often credited with inventing the tool in the years following the Big Blowup. However, stories abound about the tool's invention, and not every account is the same.

Early Tools

James B. Davis (1986), a research forester for the USDA Forest Service, noted that the Collins Tool Company developed a tool as early as 1876 that was designed to clear land. This farm tool, still on display at the Smithsonian Museum of Arts and Industry, looked and functioned essentially like today's pulaski. It is not clear why the Collins land grubbing tool was not used either to put out fires or as a model for a practical firefighting tool.

As Davis (1986) points out, early fire tools were whatever firefighters happened to have available. Early firefighting usually involved "knocking down" or beating out the flames, because water was generally not available. Beating out was usually done with a coat, a slicker, a wet sack, or even a saddle blanket. "A commonly used tool," notes Davis (1986), "was a pine bough cut on arrival at the fire edge." Farming and logging tools came into use, including the shovel, ax, hoe, and rake. "[L]ittle thought was given to size, weight, and balance," notes Davis (1986).

Jerry Williams is the national historian for the USDA Forest Service in Washington, D.C.

Early firefighting usually involved "knocking down" or beating out the flames, because water was generally not available.

For many years, "ranger inventors" toyed with the idea of building one tool that could do several jobs and be carried on a horse or pack mule and by a firefighter or tree planter. Many variations of such tools were tried and discarded. Several did rise to the top, including the Macleod tool, invented in 1905 by Ranger Malcolm Macleod on the Sierra National Forest in California. This sturdy combination rake-and-hoe or ax-and-mattock has withstood the test of time, although it never gained the popularity of the pulaski.

Pulaski Origins

Davis (1986) describes the pulaski's disputed origins. Earle P. Dudly

claimed to have invented a pulaski-like tool by having a local blacksmith modify a lightweight mining pick. He said he used the tool for firefighting in the Forest Service's Northern Region in 1907.

William G. Weigle, supervisor of the Coeur d'Alene National Forest, also took credit for inventing a pulaski-like tool, though not for firefighting. Weigle wanted a new tool to replace the mattock for planting and other forestry work. In late 1910 or 1911, Weigle sent Rangers Joe Halm and Ed Holcomb to Ranger Ed Pulaski's home blacksmith shop to turn out a combination ax, mattock, and shovel.



Firefighters with pulaskis in Oregon in 1939. By the 1920s, pulaskis were a standard firefighting tool throughout much of the United States. Photo: Ray M. Filloon, USDA Forest Service, Umatilla National Forest, OR, 1939.



The device proved to be too awkward for use as a planting tool. But Pulaski kept using and improving it. He abandoned the shovel part and reshaped the ax and mattock blades. By 1913, he had a well-balanced tool with a sharp ax on one side and a grubbing blade on the other.

By 1920, the Forest Service's Northern Region had "adopted the tool as its own," according to the fire historian Stephen J. Pyne (2001). The Forest Service asked for commercial production in quantity, and the pulaski and shovel soon became "the dominant, defining tools of fire control" (Pyne 2001).

Pulaski Legend

Ed Pulaski might not have invented the tool that bears his name, but he certainly helped to develop, improve, and popularize it (Davis 1986). Today, many thousands of pulaskis are ordered every year by the Federal Government, as well as by State and county firefighting organizations. Forestry supply catalogs always seem to have a category for pulaski fire tools.

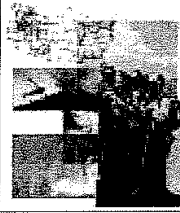
For more than 75 years, firefighting has been defined by the tool named for Ed Pulaski. Pyne (2001) calls it "the supreme fire tool," noting that it "embedded the legend of 1910 more firmly than any agency stunt,

congressional memorial, or recovered memory." Every time a firefighter reaches for a pulaski, he or she figuratively retells "the story of Big Ed and the Big Blowup, the saga of the Great Fires and the year that tried to contain them" (Pyne 2001).*

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* For the story of Ed Pulaski, see the article by Jerry Williams on page 19 of this issue.



YOUR NATIONAL FIRE PLAN AT WORK

Assessing Postfire Emergency Rehabilitation Conditions

Funded by the National Fire Plan (NFP), scientists at the USDA Forest Service's Southwest Forest Science Complex (SFSC) in Flagstaff, AZ, are providing land managers with postfire data from predictive models to help prevent erosion and catastrophic flooding. The models are also used to research the effects of erosion on wildland fire, vegetation treatments, hydrology, and geomorphology.

Similar SFSC research efforts using NFP monies include collaboration with the Joint Fire Sciences Program (JFSP) to link a study about the effectiveness of contour-felled logs in retaining soil in high-severity burned areas to research about postfire watershed responses.

Other efforts by SFSC scientists using NFP funds include:

- Signing agreements to collaborate with other research institutions in updating a model that identifies time trends in watershed response and monitors water yield responses to wildland fire and fuels reduction treatments in the Southwest;
- Researching soil chemical or physical properties after a fire or after fuel treatments, in partnership with a JFSP study on the microbiological effects of fire in ponderosa pine ecosystems;
- Restoring a gauging station in the Workman Creek watershed, Sierra Archa Experimental Forest, to continue to monitor water and sediment yields from the Coon Creek Fire in Arizona;
- Remeasuring riparian geomorphic and vegetation transects on four streams in and adjacent to the 1991 Dude Fire in Arizona's Tonto National Forest; and
- Preparing a manuscript for publication in 2002 on the processing of archived hydrologic data used to assess the effects of wildland fire on postfire snow-melt hydrology. ■

*Occasionally, *Fire Management Today* tells a success story or describes an exemplary project under the National Fire Plan. Readers can find many more such accounts on the Website for the National Fire Plan at <<http://www.fireplan.gov>>.

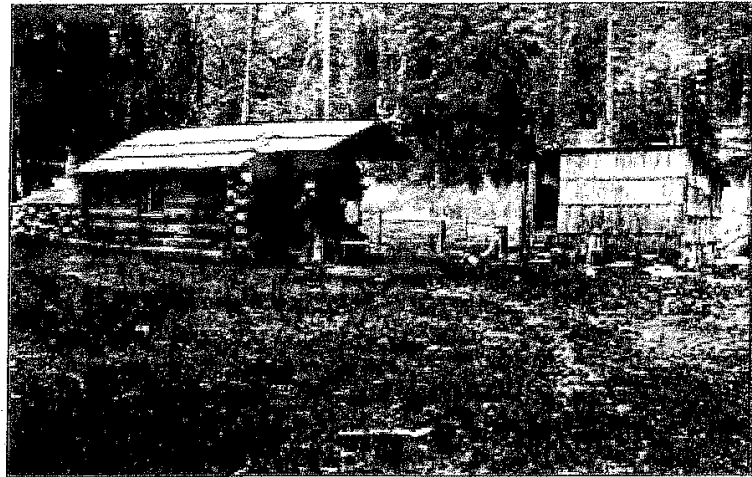
the noise of the fire and wind," he directed the men to take blankets and follow him. "Trees were falling all about" and it was "almost impossible to see through the smoky darkness," but Pulaski was familiar with the backcountry trails. He led his crew to an old mine tunnel, reaching it just in time before the fire closed in behind them.

Pulaski ordered the men to lie face down to keep from suffocating, "for the tunnel was filling with fire gas and smoke." One man panicked and tried to rush into the firestorm, but Pulaski stopped him at gunpoint. "The first man who tries to leave this tunnel I will shoot," he said.

When the mine timbers caught fire, Pulaski hung wet blankets over the entrance. Filling his hat with water from the mine floor, he doused the burning timbers. "The men were in a panic of fear, some crying, some praying." Many passed out from the heat, smoke, and fumes. Pulaski battled the blaze at the mine entrance until he, too, lost consciousness.

Pulaski remained unconscious for hours. Then he heard someone say, "Come outside, boys, the boss is dead." "Like hell he is," he replied. It was 5 a.m. on August 21, and the men were becoming conscious. Dragging themselves outside to a creek, they found the water still too warm to drink. Five men never regained consciousness. The rest staggered back toward Wallace. Rescuers met them on the way.

The survivors were "in a terrible condition, all of us hurt or burned." Pulaski himself was temporarily blinded, with terrible burns on his hands. He spent nearly two months in the hospital, recovering from



Homestead in the Northern Rockies on the eve of the Big Blowup. Homesteaders fled the flames to local towns, which were often evacuated by train. Photo: B.L. Wheeler, USDA Forest Service, Boise National Forest, ID, 1909.

blindness and pneumonia. His experience left him with "poor eyes, weak lungs, and throat; but, thank God, I am not now blind."

A Survivor's Story

Sherry Devlin (2000), a staff writer for the newspaper *The Missoulian*, recounted a letter from William Chance, a member of Pulaski's crew, about the heroism of Big Ed. Chance was new to firefighting, barely a day on the fireline when the Big Blowup came.

"Fire came at us rapidly," wrote Chance. The blaze was unimaginably ferocious. Pulaski told his men to follow him back to town. However, the people of Wallace had ignited a backfire, trapping Pulaski and his men between two converging walls of flame. The crew took refuge in an old adit.

The firefighters were skeptical about their chances of surviving inside the tunnel. But Pulaski "emphasized his point with his six-shooters." "Inside, the tunnel was a mad house," Chance wrote. "Some men went berserk, clamoring over

the prostrate bodies, choking, gasping. Others praying. Others laughing. I'll never forget one man lustily singing, "The Pride of the House is Mama's Baby."

Chance passed out. Awakening, he crawled toward the mine entrance and found Pulaski there, badly burned after trying to extinguish burning timbers with his hands. Chance helped Pulaski and others crawl down the mountainside to Wallace. In town, Pulaski took the hungry to a restaurant and the rest to a hospital, then went home to his wife and 7-year-old daughter.

Pyne's Story

Stephen J. Pyne (2001) offers a comprehensive account of the Pulaski story in his masterful book *Year of the Fires* (see the sidebar). On August 20, Pulaski and others were riding up the West Fork when the fire began burning behind them. Perhaps these new fires were backfires started by residents of Wallace to save their town.

Pulaski began to lead the crew to safety, but the fire threatened them

"The first man who tries to leave this tunnel I will shoot."

—Ed Pulaski

from all sides. "They advanced but haltingly, as Pulaski would dash ahead to scout the way and then return to lead the terrified group to the next spot." The terrified men stuck with Pulaski only because they did not know the trail.

Pulaski, "with a wet gunnysack over his head," located the Nicholson Mine and determined it was safe. Then he led the men toward it. "The final dash was a horror," with one man lagging behind and dying. Finally, Pulaski urged the remaining 44 men into "a shaft 75 to 80 feet deep, barely the height of a man, with a trickle of water running through it."

The crew retreated as far as possible into the mine. "[T]he men packed the narrow passage like oats in a feedbag, while Pulaski tried to beat out the flames at the entrance with a horse blanket and a hat full of water." Others might have tried to help. With "their fresh air shrinking and their fears swelling," the men began to panic. At least one man tried to push his way out, but at the entrance "he met Big Ed Pulaski, pistol in hand, who said that he would shoot the first man who tried to leave."

Pulaski finally passed out at the entrance to the mine. When he regained consciousness, "[h]is lungs were a mess, his eyes almost useless." Those inside the mine

"were a little better off," and the men dragged themselves out of the mine. They called roll and realized that some men were missing. Five were found dead inside the tunnel. Two horses had also survived inside the mine "but in such wretched condition that they were shot on the spot."

Folk Hero

Big Ed carried the scars of the Big Blowup, especially on his hands and face, for the remainder of his life. For years, he was the only person who regularly tended the graves of the fallen firefighters. Pulaski worked on the Wallace Ranger District for another 20 years, retiring in 1930. He died in 1931 from injuries associated with an auto accident. For a nation suffering through the Great Depression, Ed Pulaski became, according to Pyne (1982), "a celebrity, a symbol of a strenuous life spent bravely battling the reckless waste of natural resources. ... For firefighters he became a folk hero."

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PYNE TELLS THE PULASKI STORY

Editor's note: Stephen J. Pyne, the leading fire historian in the United States, conducted exhaustive research on the Big Blowup for his book Year of the Fires (2001). The following excerpts illustrate Pyne's masterful account of Ed Pulaski's story.

The final dash was a horror. Only the fact that they were trailing the creek, tucked into the ravine, while the flames raced with the wind along the upper contours of the slopes, likely spared them from being instantly incinerated. By now the fire was around them, and the winds bellowing like thunder, and the embers thick as snowflakes. The tortured winds snapped off giant cedars and hurled them across the hills. ...

The crew became almost senseless. They could neither hear nor speak nor see nor taste nor barely feel. They clung to one another and ran and stumbled along the trail, only because that took less thought than anything else they might do. Richard Wood lagged and died, possibly crushed by a flaming tree. Along the way a bear joined the cavalcade. ...



The National Wildfire Education Center and Museum "The Pulaski Project"

from the D'zign Group Architectural Submission

Building Design

The Pulaski Project's role is to educate and facilitate the advancement of the paradigm shift in our relationship to wildfire as represented by the National Fire Plan. This facility will transform the Silver Valley, Shoshone County and the State of Idaho into a demonstration zone for good forest health and wildfire-related practices.

The project will provide a platform for addressing all critical facets of forest management by incorporating creative, interactive and modern technologies to engage and stimulate all senses, thereby creating a lasting, memorable and impact filled experience.

The project's concept and design is inspired and patterned after the Pulaski axe and what it was designed to protect, our National Forests.

Staying true to the form of the Pulaski, the canopies over the entry symbolize the Pulaski axe blade. Next, the pivotal point of the axe, the handle, is manifested as the informational hub centered within the main space and will act as the pivotal point for all visitors. Finally, the mattock, or hoe portion of the Pulaski takes shape as the library and resource center.

The building's circular form simulates the natural growth of a tree. As a tree grows out from its center accumulating rings with each passing season, so do visitors, attaining valuable knowledge as they begin their experiential journey starting from the central information hub and through out the entire project.

The Visitor's Experience

Your experience begins as you arrive in the parking lot and are drawn in by the building's transparency, which allows you to view the inside activities from the outside. As you make your way to the building you encounter the processional entry consisting of vertical canopy supports that double as three-dimensional manifestations and displays of a fire in progress. This is made possible by utilizing video screens and modern technological special effects, all while under the protection of the Pulaski axe shaped canopies.

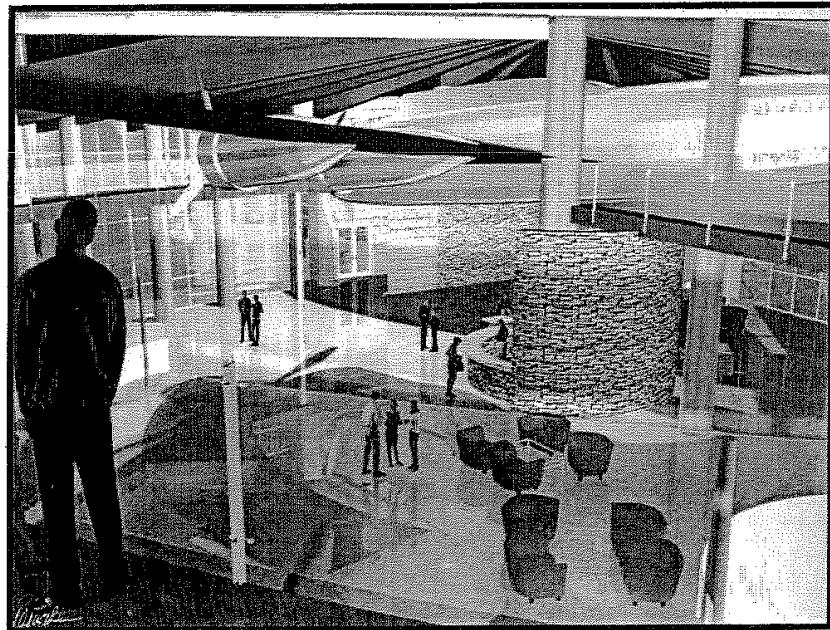
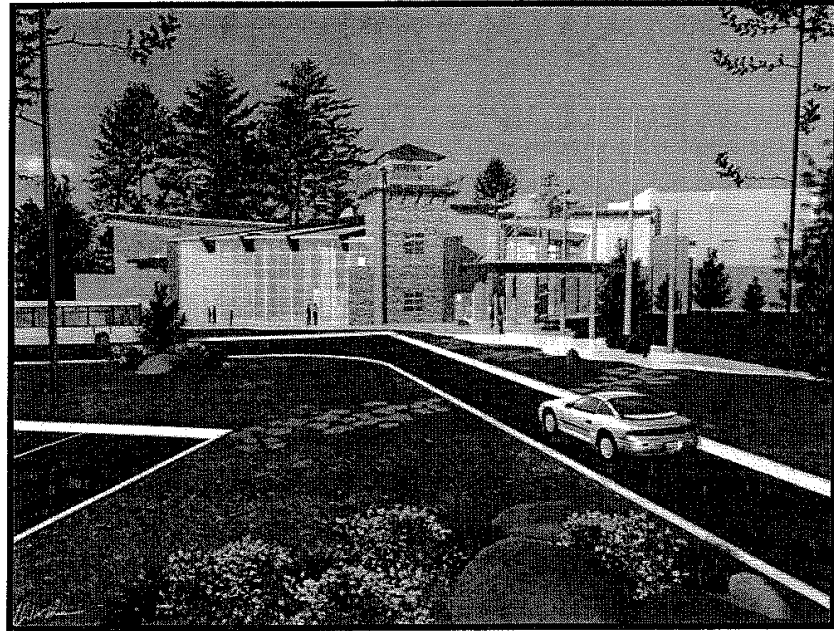
Upon entering the vestibule, it becomes apparent you are standing under and at the base of a fire-spotting tower, which is the project's focal point and can first be viewed from the outside as you arrive. You glance to your side and see the entry to the two-story office and administrative wing that adjoins the main building as a rectilinear mass. You progress into a vast volume of space and toward the information hub, and are immediately confronted by a large air tanker with rotating propellers and a giant cloud of hot pink fire retardant being dropped by the air borne tanker.

The experience continues on the main level as you come in contact with various interactive kiosks and activities, such as the furnace experience, where you walk over a textured glass floor and view the process of turning biomass into fuel. The ever evolving rock wall and river, where rocks and vegetation turn black from smoke and the river turns black from soot, illustrate the effects of fire on our natural resources and the environment. The hall of technologies is alive with many interactive educational displays. Then the fire room experience combines the feel, taste, sight, sounds and smell of fire and smoke. Next, the indoor auditorium is spacious and comfortable and the outdoor "theater in the round" invites campfire type discussions, speeches, performances and meetings. Finally, the fire truck experience utilizes the latest in fire fighting technologies to provide a complete experience within a firefighter's realm.

You then progress to the upper mezzanine along the rock formation ridge for more experiential exhibits. A catwalk provides access to the air tanker exhibit where you can walk through the plane or stay and view a 3-D educational video where the plane's movement is synchronized to the video, giving visitors a virtual sense of flight. You then proceed to the fire-spotting tower: climbing to its pinnacle and utilizing historically replicated fire lookout equipment to spot distant mock fires.

Finally, you finish your virtual, interactive hands on experience by descending to the bookstore, resource center and cafeteria area to further learn about firefighting and forest management, or to purchase a bit of history before leaving the facility.

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