

**1910 Fire Commemoration  
Events Timeline—Silver Valley**

**Museum Exhibits**

Wallace Mining Museum (Wallace, ID)

Staff House Museum (Kellogg, ID)

Mullan Museum (Mullan, ID)

Spragpole Museum (Murray, ID)

**Film Festival**

**All Movies Shown @ 1pm**

**Aug 14 – Smokejumper History**  
(Staff House Museum)

**August 2010 – Guided Hikes on Pulaski  
Trail**

(Saturday's 10 am, Sunday's 1pm thru Aug. 22)

**August 14 – Re-Enactment Hike from  
Lake Elsie to the Adit in West Placer  
Creek (Pulaski's Route)**

Be in the town of Wallace to greet the forty five "firefighters" that make their way along an 8 mile route that Ranger Ed Pulaski used in 1910. The "firefighters" should be in town around 3pm.

**For More Information and Event**

**Registration:** [www.firecoop.org](http://www.firecoop.org) or

**784-0821**

**All Montana and Idaho Events at**

<http://fs.usda.gov/R1>

**Events on Big Blowup Anniversary  
August 20th and 21st**

**August 20 - Forest Service Dedication at  
Pulaski Crew Grave Site –**  
12pm Noon (9-Mile Cemetery, Wallace).

**August 21 - Procession and Dedication  
of the Firefighter Memorial (Wallace)**

**0930 - Engine Procession:** Engines from all over the Northwest will make their way through the Silver Valley, from Rose Lake to Mullan, then back to Wallace.

**1100 - Walking Procession:** A walking procession will make its way from exit 62 west along Bank St. to the visitors center. The procession will be comprised of the US Forest Service and Coeur d'Alene Fire Department Honor Guard, Coeur d'Alene Fire Department Pipe and Drum Corps, US Forest Service Pack String, Buffalo Soldiers, firefighters, and fire engines.

**1230 - 1910 Memorial Dedication:** Speakers include; Mayor of Wallace, Governor of the State of Idaho, Author Timothy Egan, and US Forest Service Director of Fire and Aviation Tom Harbour.

**1400 - Numerous events in the town of Wallace.** The Buffalo Soldiers will be doing a monologue and showing a historical video presentation. Along with the 1910 commemoration, the City of Wallace will also be holding their annual Huckleberry Heritage Festival; with live music, kids activities, food and craft vendors, a Huckleberry Bake-off, and much, much more.....

**1910 Commemoration Speaker  
Series**

Come spend an evening with four incredibly talented historians on the events that unfolded in August of 1910. There will be an open bar with finger food provided after the presentations.

**August 19 - Stephen Pyne** Author of:  
"Year of the Fires"

Topic: The significance of the big burn - the lasting impacts of this fire.

Wallace Elks – 7pm - \$5.00

**August 20 – George Sibley Documentary:**  
"Ordeal by Fire"

**Rocky Barker** Author: "Scorched Earth"

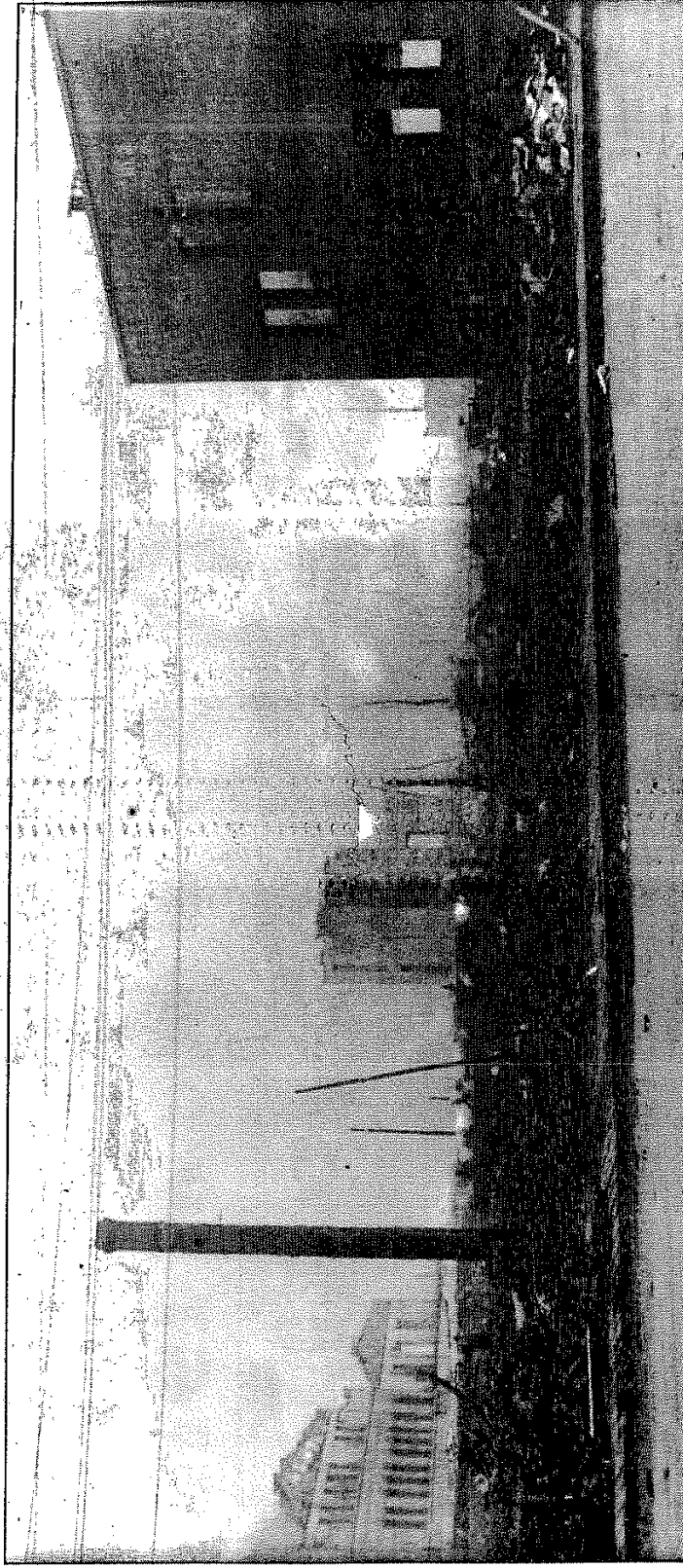
Topic: Wildland Fire Policy and Limitations

Wallace Elks – 7pm - \$5.00

**August 21 – Timothy Egan** Author of: "The Big  
Burn" Wallace Elks – 7pm - \$5.00

**1910 FIRE FACTS**

- 3 Million acres burned
- 78 Firefighters lost, 7 Civilians
- Fire was 185 miles long and 65 miles wide
- Decimated the towns of Taft, Wallace, Haugan, Avery, De Borgia
- 1736 Fires, of which 233 were lightning
- 7.6 Billion Board Feet of Timber Destroyed
- Value of Timber Destroyed in 1910, \$13,470,906
- Total cost of firefighting to Government in 1910 \$795,281



Arthur Fay 1910. Photo courtesy of Historic Wallace Preservation Society.

## 1910 Commemoration and Firefighter Memorial

### Dedication Agenda

**Saturday, August 21, 2010**  
**Wallace Visitor's Center**

- 11:00 am** Engine and Walking Procession through Wallace
- 12:40 pm** 1910 Ceremony Commences with Pipers and Drums
  - Posting of Colors
  - Master of Ceremony Opens Ceremony
  - Jon Cantamessa, Shoshone County Commissioner
  - Welcome by Wallace Mayor Dick Vester
  - Governor Otter shares State perspective
  - Author Timothy Egan shares historical perspective
  - US Forest Service National Fire Director, Tom Harbour presents USFS perspective
  - Unveiling of Firefighter Memorial

### Minute of Silence for Fallen Firefighters

- 1:45 pm** Ceremony Concludes
- 2:00 pm** Aerial display of water drop against hillside

In August of 1910, towering wildfires driven by gale-force winds burned over 3 million acres of verdant National Forest land in North Idaho and western Montana.

The conflagration consumed great swaths of cedar, white pine, yellow pine,

larch and ponderosa; it threatened firefighters, homesteaders, townspeople, miners and railroaders. For two dreadful days, Aug. 20-21, the hurricane blew. For two days the flames were unstoppable. When at last the winds died down, 85 people had lost their lives.

Some called it the "Big Blowup", or simply the 1910 Fire. It was a catastrophe that changed the entire complexion of the landscape in just a few hours - buildings flattened, homesteads destroyed, railroad and mining camps utterly incinerated.

For those who lived through those deadly days, who smelled the smoke and felt the scalding heat, 1910 would never be far from memory.

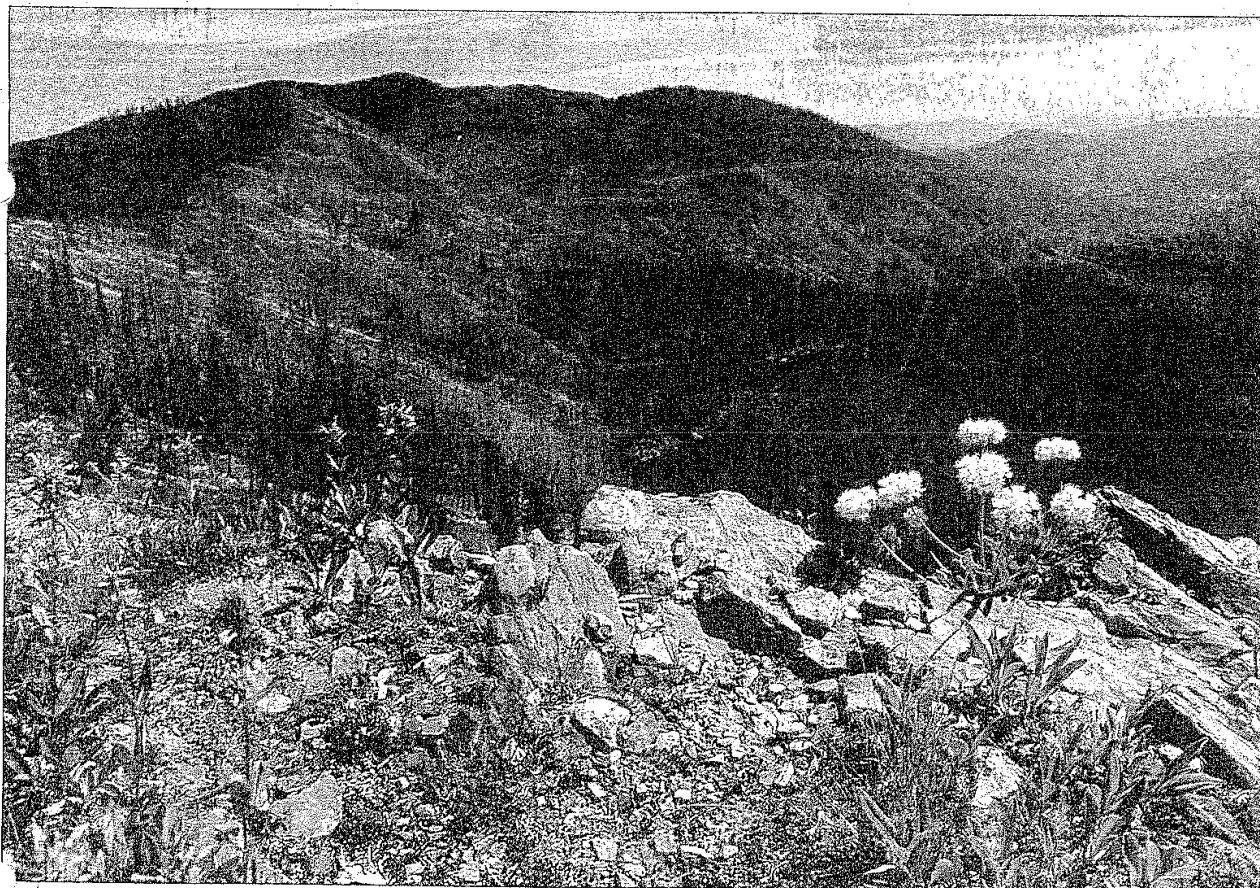
And now, a full century later, the fire's legend has not diminished.

# THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2010 |  SUN AND CLOUDS ▲ 83 ▼ 53 | WWW.SPOKESMAN.COM

FLAME AND RUIN  
THE FIRES OF 1910

## Blazing beauty



PHOTOS BY RICH LANDERS richl@spokesman.com

In the backcountry south of Superior, Mont., Upper Siamese Lake lies against the Idaho border in the Lolo National Forest. The lake is within the Great Burn area proposed for designation as wilderness. The wildflower in the foreground is yellow buckwheat.

### Many seek to set apart Great Burn landscape

By Rich Landers

richl@spokesman.com, (509) 459-5508

The 1910 fires – and significant wildfires that followed into the 1930s – had a devastating hand in bestowing new life on rugged portions of the Bitterroot Mountains.

The landscape was so thoroughly blackened in some areas between Lookout and Lolo passes that loggers turned their attention elsewhere while nature found a new canvas for blending its palette of flora and fauna.

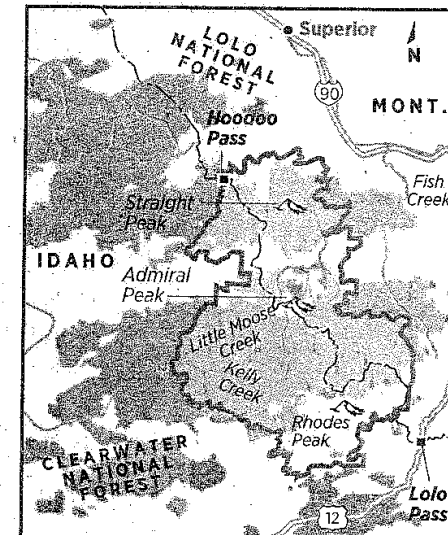
Fires had essentially banked a reservoir of wildness eventually recognized by national forest managers.

And as the land has gradually been rediscovered by recreationists, a decades-old debate smolders over proposals to designate roughly 275,000 acres along the Bitterroot Divide and the Montana-Idaho border as the Great Burn wilderness.

See GREAT BURN, A5







Dave Cook, of Spokane Valley, backpacks into a roadless and trailless portion of the Great Burn.

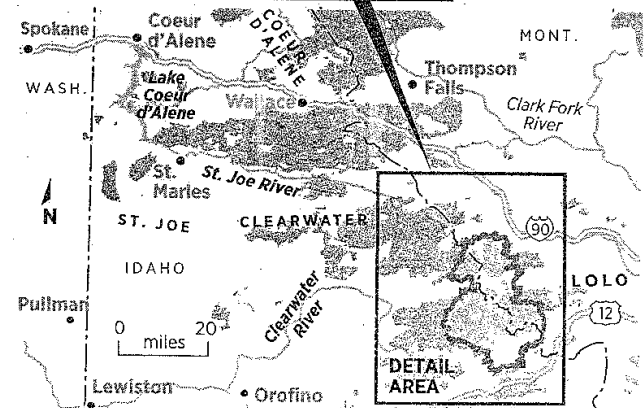


#### Wilderness in waiting

Roughly 275,000 acres straddling the Montana-Idaho border have been recommended for wilderness designation since the 1980s.

-  National forest
-  1910 burned areas
-  Proposed Great Burn Wilderness Area
-  Stateline

SOURCE: Staff research



MOLLY QUINN mollyq@spokesman.com

## FLAME AND RUIN THE FIRES OF 1910

### GREAT BURN

Continued from A1

The name Great Burn stems from the epic August 1910 "blowup," as hundreds of lightning- and human-caused blazes exploded into an inferno whipped by hurricane-force winds.

When it was over two days later, much of a 3 million-acre path 260 miles long and 200 miles wide from the Salmon River north to Canada was charred.

Most of the destruction occurred in just six hours.

"The Great Burn area that's proposed for wilderness is a unique ecosystem in a lot of different ways," said Orville Daniels, of Missoula, a fire ecologist and supervisor of the Bitterroot or Lolo national forests from 1970 until he retired in 1994.

"The landforms and geology are different than the rest of the region; so is the ecology. There's a different moisture regime. We call it the weepy, seepy."

More than 30 lakes dot both sides of the Bitterroot Divide in the area proposed for wilderness from Hoodoo Pass south nearly to Lolo Pass.

Roadless headwaters and cold, clear waters have made Idaho's Kelly Creek a world-class native cutthroat stream and Montana's Fish Creek the most important habitat for threatened bull trout in the middle Clank Fork drainage.

The Great Burn's diversity is spiced by pockets of timber leap-frogged by the fires, such as those up the West Fork of Fish Creek, where 550-year-old Western red cedars still stand.

But it's the fires that set the area apart in our

lifetime, Daniels said. "They opened the country."

Still, the notion to preserve and protect the transformed landscape for future generations was decades off.

While much of the area was of no immediate interest to loggers, livestock grazers had their eye on greenery emerging from newly opened spaces.

"In the 1920s out of Superior (Mont.), they shipped 100,000 head of domestic sheep that had summered in the Great Burn," Daniels said. "That, of course, had an impact on the ecosystem, too."

The land has continued to mature, and Daniels guessed that 5,000 sheep couldn't make a living there now.

But a wilder sort of grazing followed as brush displaced the sheep.

As the path of the fires gradually developed into vast meadows of grasses, forbs and taller brush, the landscape became ripe for lynx, wolverines, mountain goats and especially Rocky Mountain elk, which had largely been extirpated by early settlers.



PHOTOS BY RICH LANDERS rich@spokesman.com  
The landscape around an unnamed lake in the proposed Great Burn wilderness is still evolving after the great forest fires of 1910.

TODAY ON THE WEB

[spokesman.com](http://spokesman.com)

/1910fire

- ▶ **Photo gallery:** Large-format look at the Route of the Hiawatha
- ▶ **Audio slide show:** Staff writer Jim Kershner narrates "The Big Burn of 1910"
- ▶ **Tales of heroism and sacrifice:** Photography, audio and excerpts
- ▶ **Then and now:** Large-format photos compare 1910, present day
- ▶ **Timeline:** Breaking down the events of the 1910 fires

pocket-vetoed by President Ronald Reagan in a move that helped Republican Conrad Burns unseat Melcher in the next election.

The Great Burn continues to be a victim of the stalemate the "W" word has caused between conservationists and industry in Montana and Idaho.

Current Montana Sen. Jon Tester has introduced the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act, a bill seeking to end this drawn-out dispute over wilderness in Western Montana. It does not include the Great Burn, partly to avoid political complications with its extension into Idaho.

Tester's is the first wilderness bill introduced by the Montana delegation since 1997 – and it's noteworthy that the bill does not include the term "wilderness."

But there's new hope for the Great Burn's wilderness-in-waiting through a group convened two years ago by Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho,

The Clearwater Basin Collaborative won a national pat on the back this month for bringing conservation, recreation, industry and community groups together on public land issues, earning a \$1 million federal grant to improve watershed habitat.

The CBC is on a roll, and the Great Burn is high on its agenda, said Harris, whose 40 years of wilderness advocacy was tapped with a seat at the CBC table.

"The industry is supporting a conservation agenda in areas including the Great Burn in return for consideration of land we're looking at for management activity in other portions of the national forest," said Bill Higgins, of Grangeville, a spokesman for the Idaho Forest Group and a CBC member.

Higgins is reasonably confident that about 102 years after the 1910 fires distinguished the Great Burn, there's likely to be a wilderness bill supported by industry and conservationists, snowmobilers and skiers – an outcome almost as epic as the Big Burn itself.

### Wild attraction

Heart Lake, south of Superior, Mont., on the Trout Creek Road near Hoodoo Pass, is the most popular hiking and horseback destination in the proposed Great Burn wilderness, Forest Service officials say.

Well-maintained Trail 171 leads three miles into the lake for day trips and camping, with several other options for extended trips – all with good access from Interstate 90.

For a loftier view deeper into the proposed wilderness, hike south from Hoodoo Pass on Stataline Trail 738 about eight miles to Goose Lake for camping and other hiking options in territory frequented by a pack of gray wolves.

*Rich Landers*

North American ecosystems to feature in a book, "America's Hidden Wilderness: Lands of Secclusion."

The Great Burn roadless area was among the chosen, along with Utah's Grand Gulch, the Mojave Desert and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Dale Harris, 63, of Missoula, formerly with the Wilderness Institute at the University of Montana, helped guide a National Geographic photographer through the Great Burn over six weeks.

"The burn is not spectacular for being vertical like Glacier Park, but rather for its horizontal landscape and connectivity for wildlife," Harris said. "The photographer had no trouble finding material. He shot 10,000 photos."

The book was published in 1988, just before a Montana wilderness bill championed by Sen. John Melcher, D-Mont., passed Congress, only to be

Elk from Yellowstone Park were delivered by truck and train in the 1930s to jump-start herds in the Bitterroot and Clearwater regions. In a refuge of rugged terrain and few roads, the elk flourished in their rich new habitat – even in the Lolo and Lochsa areas, where the Lewis and Clark expedition nearly starved for lack of game in the region's paltry wildlife habitat.

"By the '50s," Daniels said, "the Great Burn area had the premier elk herd in the United States," a distinction that wasn't overlooked by popular hunting writers, such as Jack O'Connor.

"It stands out in my mind that the staff on the Superior District was proposing the Great Burn for wilderness in 1968, just four years after the Wilderness Act. That

land, also called the Hoodoo roadless area, had struck those folks as such special country even at a time when the Forest Service mission was so strongly for timber."

When the Lolo National Forest was writing management plans in the 1970s, foresters projected it would be two more decades before timber regenerating in their portion of the Great Burn would be mature for logging.

Directed by Congress, all the forests were required to evaluate roadless acres in the '70s and '80s and recommend areas to be considered for designation as wilderness, the most protective status for public land.

The Great Burn emerged strong. Even though the timber and mining industries had dug in their heels to counter the national wilderness movement, the Great Burn generally had their support because it was rugged, remote from mills and still relatively timber poor, said Doug Gober, North Fork District Ranger in Orofino.

In the mid-'80s, National Geographic selected eight unique



Dale Harris has led the effort to designate the Great Burn as wilderness.

foresters projected it would be two more decades before timber regenerating in their portion of the Great Burn would be mature for logging.

Directed by Congress, all the forests were required to evaluate roadless acres in the '70s and '80s and recommend areas to be considered for designation as wilderness, the most protective status for public land.

The Great Burn emerged strong. Even though the timber and mining industries had dug in their heels to counter the national wilderness movement, the Great Burn generally had their support because it was rugged, remote from mills and still relatively timber poor, said Doug Gober, North Fork District Ranger in Orofino.

In the mid-'80s, National Geographic selected eight unique

## FLAME AND RUIN THE FIRES OF 1910

# History's lessons

Modern firefighting tactics owe much to insight gained from the 1910 fires, and from the policies that followed



Katy Melun works the North Zone of the Coeur d'Alene Interagency Dispatch Center at the Coeur d'Alene Airport, coordinating lookouts, firefighters and aerial tankers to answer any fire calls in the area.

By Becky Kramer  
beckyk@spokesman.com, (208) 765-7122

One hundred years after the nation's largest wildfires blazed across the Northern Rockies, blackening hillsides as far as the eye could see, the question lingers:

Could the Big Burn happen again? Absolutely, says Mark Finney, a research forester at the Rocky Mountain Research Laboratory in Missoula.

The death toll of 85 would probably be lower. Modern firefighting emphasizes safety, weather forecasts are more sophisticated, and better communication alerts rural residents when wildfires are headed their way.

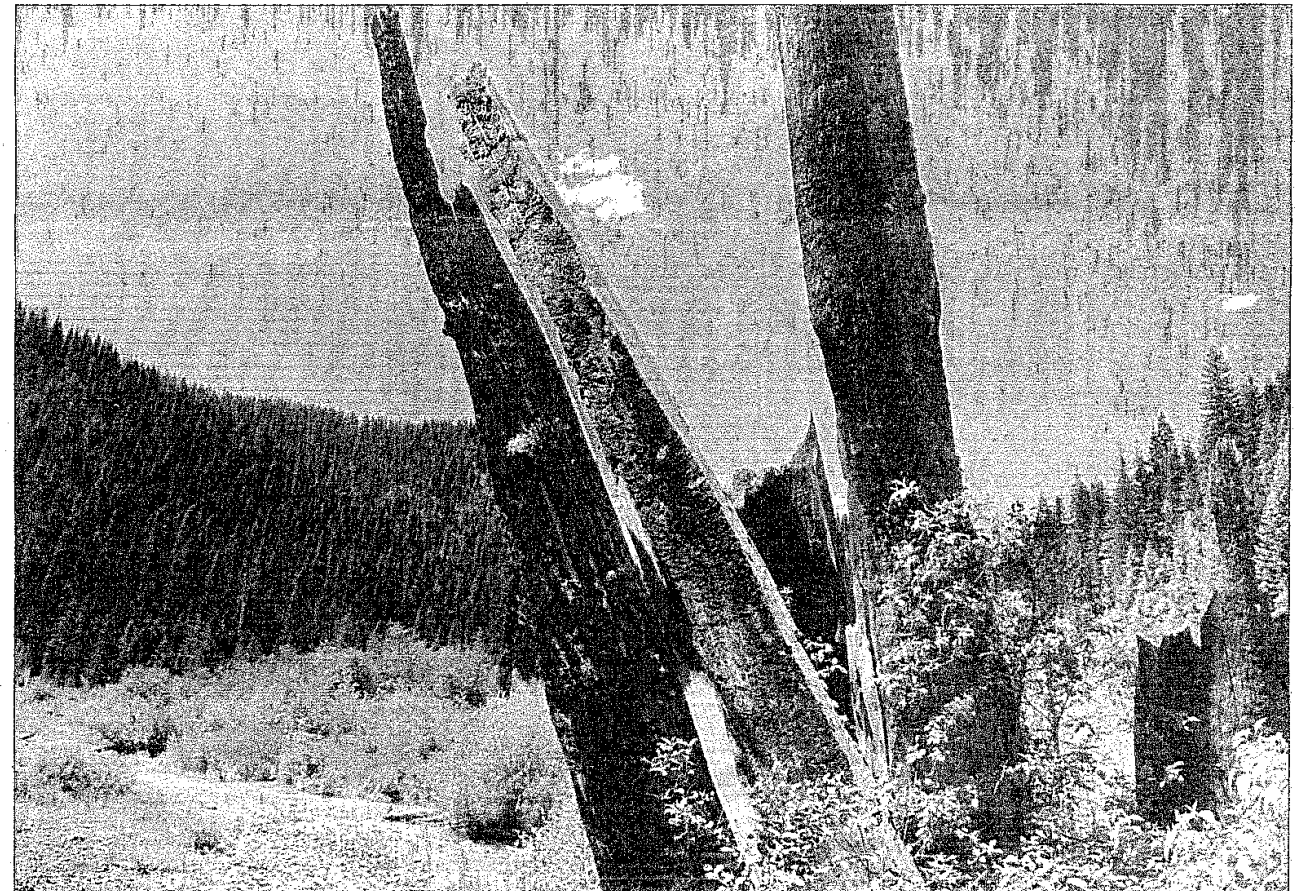
But the events that triggered the 1910 fires were largely natural phenomena. It's possible that 3

million acres could burn again, with the majority of the land torched within 48 hours, Finney said.

"We have droughts today. ... We have cold fronts and winds. ... We have ignition factors. ... All of the factors are still there."

Other researchers have studied the 1910 fires as a history-shaping event. Photos of ruined landscapes and ashy streams rallied public support for the U.S. Forest Service, a relatively unpopular federal agency at the time

See FIRES, A6



CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON christa@spokesman.com

Hundred-year-old cedars that burned in 1910, called "ghost cedars," line the road to Moon Pass.

## Charred snags stand as haunting reminder

It's called the Valley of the Ghosts, and it contains the hulking snags of cedars burned by the 1910 fires.

Swampy cedar bogs surrounded the North Fork of the St. Joe River before fire swept through the area.

"Normally, these sites are way too wet to sustain significant fire," said Jason Kirchner, a spokesman for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The fact that they burned illustrates the fire's intensity.

"Some of the trees were estimated at 500 years old," Kirchner said. "The fire decimated a centuries-old forest that's not going to grow back."

### About this series

A century ago, what's still known as the largest forest fire in U.S. history burned 3 million acres in the Inland Northwest, leveling entire towns and killing at least 85 people. Today's report, which continues on Pages A6 and A7, is the final installment in an eight-part print and web series about the fires and their legacy. Find extensive coverage online at [spokesman.com/1910fire](http://spokesman.com/1910fire).

The loss of the shade cover from mature trees prevented young cedars from taking root after the fire. Shrubs filled in the open ground. When the Forest Service replanted cedars in the area, gophers ate the roots, killing the new trees.

Today, the snags are surrounded by brushy willows, alder and wild roses. Swallows dart through the thickets.

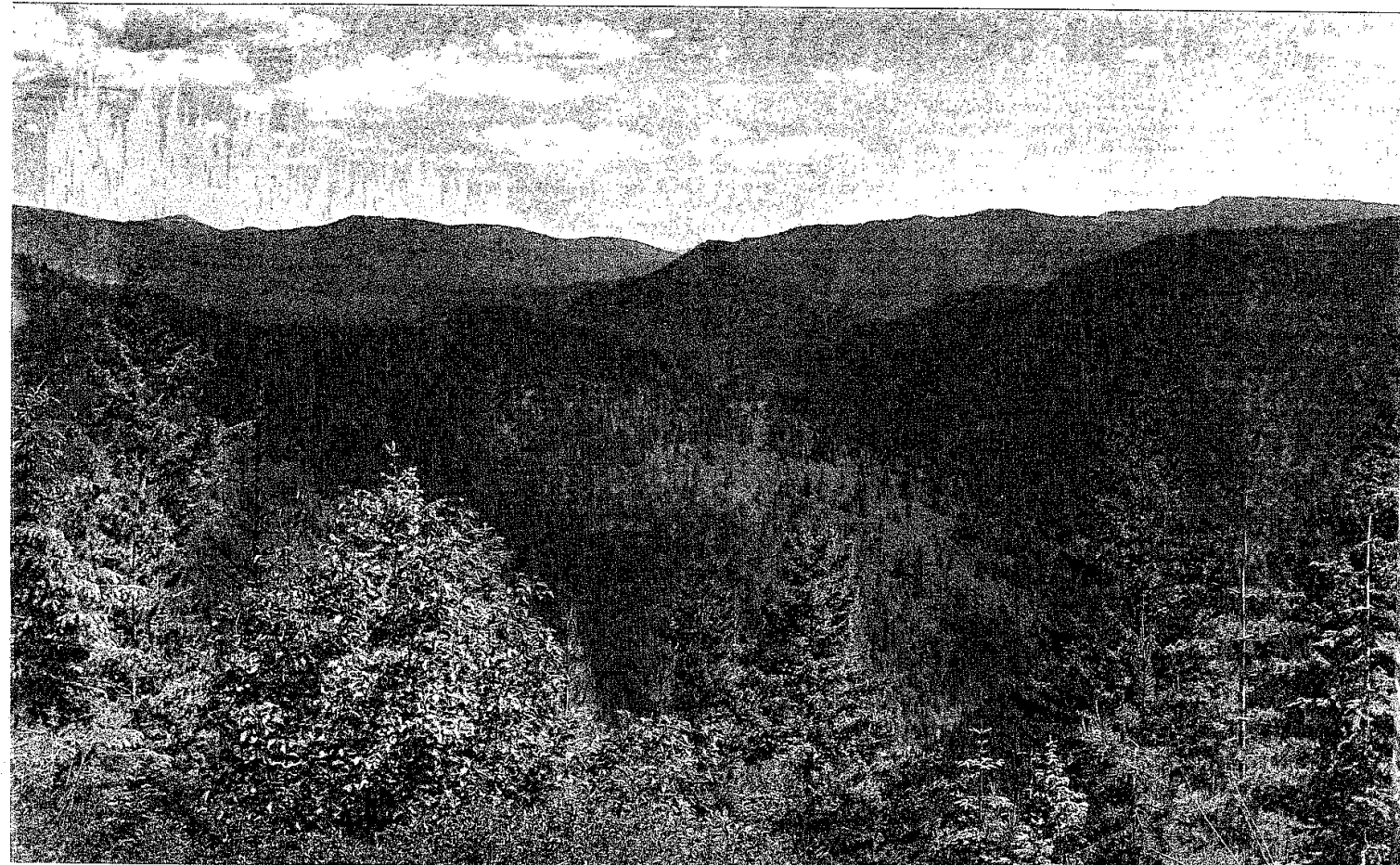
Some of the ghost snags have fallen over. Others still point skyward.

"They're a dramatic reminder on the landscape," Kirchner said.

Becky Kramer

# FLAME AND RUIN

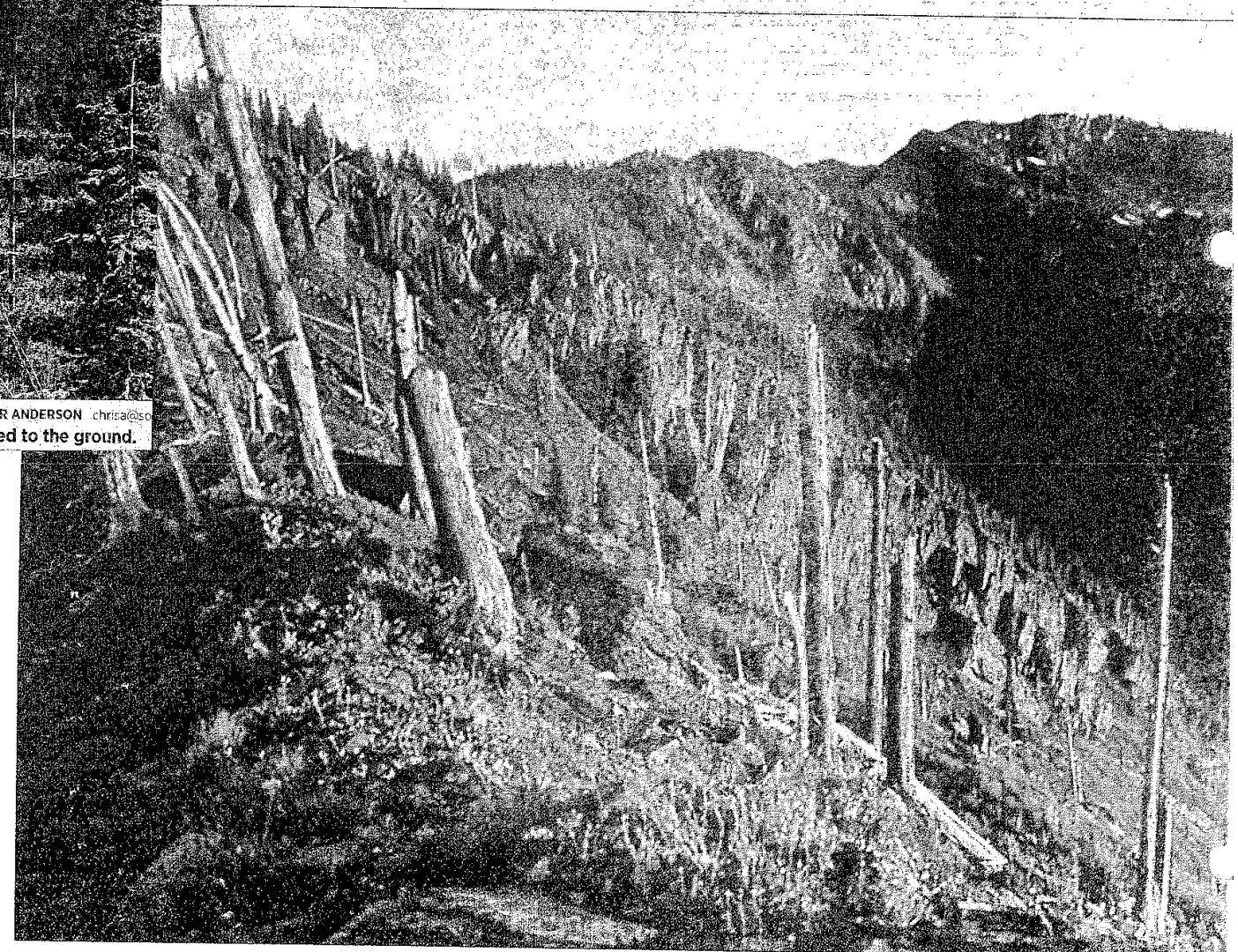
## THE FIRES OF 1910



PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON chrisa@so  
From the top of Moon Pass looking southeast, the forest has recovered from the Big Burn. In August 1910, most everything in this photo was burned to the ground.

### Series lineup

- **Sunday:** What happened during the fires of 1910, and why they matter
- **Monday:** A look at the Route of the Hiawatha, which penetrates the heart of the Big Burn area
- **Tuesday:** The search for, and rediscovery of, the Pulaski Tunnel
- **Wednesday:** The men who fought the fires
- **Thursday:** First-person historical narratives and stories of survival
- **Friday:** Two wild and raucous towns, wiped off the map by the fires
- **Today:** A Great Burn Wilderness waits for approval
- **Sunday:** The legacy of the fires, and why a Big Blowup could happen again in the Inland Northwest



Signs of the 1910 fires still stand on the ridge along the Stateline Trail above Steep Lake, Idaho's Clearwater National Forest portion of the Big Burn.

## FIRES

Continued from A1

of the fires. Established just five years earlier, it was under attack from Western congressmen, who didn't support government ownership of choice timberlands.

The Big Burn became the Forest Service's defining narrative. Tales of firefighters' sacrifices and widespread destruction turned the agency into one of the world's largest firefighting organizations, with 10,500 firefighters and a \$1.6 billion annual fire suppression budget.

To Finney, however, the Big Burn was a weather event. A drought, an active fire season and a cold front aligned to create one of North America's most destructive firestorms.

"People tend to think of it as almost a supernatural event," said Finney, who studies fire behavior. "It wasn't. It was the convergence of three rather typical weather patterns."

The first was drought. After spring rains failed in 1910, the wildfire season got an early start, with fires reported in April.

"It was dry, but it wasn't the driest year on record by any stretch of the imagination," said Finney, noting that 2000, 2003 and 2007 shaped up as even drier years in the Northern Rockies.

The Big Burn's second ingredient was active fires. Forest fires were reported throughout the summer, with a late July thunderstorm igniting hundreds of small blazes.

Here again, Finney said, the number of active fires wasn't extreme. In 2003 and 2007, a similar number of fires burned across the Northern Rockies. But those years didn't have the third and critical ingredient: wind.

On Aug. 20, 1910, an area of low pressure drifted south from Canada, creating counterclockwise winds. Old-timers called them "Palouse" because the southwesterly winds appeared to originate on the rolling hills of the Palouse farm country.

Handwritten records from the National Weather Service listed wind speeds near 20 mph in Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and KallsPELL, Mont. — brisk, but not record-breakers, Finney said.

But the winds whipped up the active fires "already cooking" in the forest, he said. Encountering tinder-dry terrain, the blazes spread quickly. As they grew in intensity, they created their own winds. Those were the gale-force blasts that uprooted trees and carried firebrands across canyons.

Under those conditions, "you can make the fire run many, many miles in a single day," Finney said.

But a couple of notable differences exist between now and 1910, according to the Forest Service. A century ago, most of the fire starts were human-caused. Cinders from the railroads' steam locomotives were notorious for igniting forest fires. Loggers burned slash piles and left campfires unattended. Prospectors set deliberate wildfires to expose mineral outcroppings.

An estimated 75 percent of the ignition starts in 1910 were caused by people, compared with 25 percent from lightning strikes. Today, far fewer wildfires are human-caused. But an active lightning storm could still create the "saturated ignitions" that existed in 1910, Finney said.

The Forest Service also does a better job of detecting and putting out wildfires when they're small, said Jason Kirchner, a spokesman for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

Some of the fires that blew up on Aug. 20 and 21, 1910, had been smoldering in the mountains since May, Kirchner said. Either they went undetected or strapped rangers didn't have

enough crews to fight them.

Today, "we put out 98 percent of wildfires, and we're able to suppress most of them almost immediately," Kirchner said.

For decades after the Big Burn, the Forest Service tried to stamp out all wildfires.

Putting out fires became a "moral imperative" of the agency, said Stephen Pyne, an Arizona State University history professor and author of "The Year of the Fires." Rangers measured their success by how effective they were at extinguishing blazes. It was a mission that resonated well with the public.

"Smoke in the woods was something that every one could understand," Pyne said during a recent talk in Coeur d'Alene.

But in the Northern Rockies, all-out fire suppression is at odds with natural cycles. The forests create woody debris faster than it can decay. Lodgepole pine and other plant species require periodic fires for regeneration. Wildlife,

### Series lineup

- **Last Sunday:** What happened during the fires of 1910, and why they matter
- **Monday:** The Route of the Hiawatha
- **Tuesday:** The search for Pulaski Tunnel
- **Wednesday:** Men who fought the fires
- **Thursday:** Historical narratives
- **Friday:** Two wild and raucous towns
- **Saturday:** A wilderness awaits approval
- **Today:** The legacy of the fires

TODAY ON THE WEB

### Spokesman.com/1910fire

- **Audio slide show:** Staff writer Jim Kershner narrates "The Big Burn of 1910"
- **Tales of heroism and sacrifice:** Photography, audio and excerpts
- **Then and now:** Large-format photos compare 1910, present day
- **Timeline:** The events of the 1910 fires

including deer and elk, need the openings left by fires for habitat.

"In conquering an enemy, we have destroyed a friend whose presence in the ecosystem is as essential as the wind and rain," William Moore, a retired Forest Service fire management chief, wrote in 1978.

By then, the agency's stance on all-out fire suppression was softening. The Forest Service had begun setting small "prescribed burns" to mimic natural fires. The agency also abolished the "10 a.m. rule," which said all forest fires should be out the morning after they were reported.

Most wildfires are still fought aggressively, said Jennifer Jones, a spokeswoman for the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

But when a lightning storm recently sparked three fires on the St. Joe Ranger District, each less than one-third of an acre in size, Forest Service officials opted to let the fires burn while monitoring them closely.

At the Coeur d'Alene Airport, an interagency dispatch center tracks wildfire activity in Idaho from the Canadian border to Lewiston. The center is a cooperative effort of the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management,

Idaho Department of Lands and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. The agencies share the \$450,000 cost of operating the center, which is staffed May to October.

Three air tankers — each capable of carrying 800 gallons of fire retardant — are on standby. The center can also dispatch a Bell 212 helicopter that drops water from a bucket.

After thunderstorms, a satellite-based lightning detection program shows where the strikes occurred. The center contracts with local pilots to fly the area and report any fires.

"We keep track of every single firefighter, every single piece of firefighting equipment and every fire in the top half of the state," said Gary Weber, the center's assistant manager. "This is the hub of activity."

The dispatch center has been quieter than usual this year, though, because of the heavy rains in May and June.

The center is an example of how firefighting has become safer and more sophisticated since 1910, said Kirchner.

"Back then, you had your pack train and you went over the ridge. You were on your own," he said. "You found the fire and you fought it where it seemed safest."

If North Idaho's firefighting needs outstrip local resources, local dispatchers can order fire crews and equipment from a regional dispatch center in Missoula. If regional supplies and crews are taxed, requests are sent to a coordination center at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

"They can look as far away as Florida for fire crews and equipment," said Rose Davis, a Forest Service spokeswoman.

It's a far cry from 1910, when the Coeur d'Alene National Forest's firefighting budget was \$30,000. Rangers had to beg for additional money to pay firefighters and order supplies.

But the best preparedness doesn't alter geography. That was on Shoshone County Commissioner Vince Rinaldi's mind this weekend as the community of Wallace marked the anniversary of the 1910 fires.

On the night of Aug. 20, 1910, wildfires swept over the mountains, burning down one-third of the town. The damage was estimated at \$1 million. Two people died.

A century later, hills above the mountain town are dark green, with dense stands of timber replacing the scorched hillsides visible in historic photographs. The growth is too thick for Rinaldi's comfort.

"The fire potential is tremendous for us," he said. "We've got a huge amount of forest that is very thick."

Rinaldi and Shoshone County's Board of Commissioners have started a collaborative group to promote forest thinning projects on 215,000 acres of federal, state and private forestland. The work, still in its formative stage, aims to reduce fuel loads near populated areas.

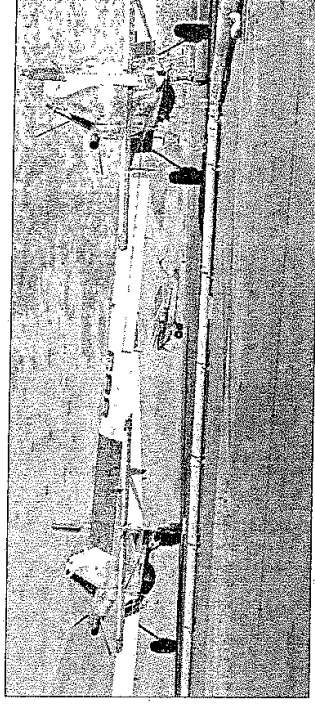
Shoshone County hasn't changed much in the past 100 years, Rinaldi noted. It's still rural, still forested and still a firetrap.

Stringers of timber extend down narrow mountain canyons into the valley. It's not hard to imagine another wildfire finding a pathway to Wallace.

"It's pretty much the same scenario," Rinaldi said. "If 1910 taught us anything, it's that fire can get here pretty quick."

Sources include "Year of the Fires," by Stephen J. Pyne, "The Big Burn: The Northwest's Fire of 1910," by Stan Cohen and Don Miller, and "The Big Burn" by Timothy Egan.

Roger Adams, right, gives a safety briefing to tanker pilots waiting to be called out on fires at the Coeur d'Alene Interagency Dispatch Center on Aug. 5.



A small plane taxis past single-engine aerial fire tankers sitting on the tarmac at the Coeur d'Alene Interagency Dispatch Center.

FLAME AND RUIN  
THE FIRES OF 1910

"They didn't think that Sen. Heyburn (right) deserved to have the park named after him. But without him, we wouldn't have this park."



Ron Hise  
Heyburn State Park manager

# Unlikely namesake



FILE The Spokesman-Review

Plummer Creek flows through the wetlands at Heyburn State Park. The park is the oldest in Idaho.

By **Becky Kramer**  
beckyk@spokesman.com, (208) 765-7122

History doesn't shed a kindly light on U.S. Sen. Weldon Heyburn, a Wallace mining attorney and strident foe of the Forest Service.

An irascible man, Heyburn once stopped an orchestra in midperformance because he didn't like a song it was playing. He also denied a young constituent a debate prize because "he does not seem to have learned enough to be a Republican."

While other Republicans backed the eight-hour workday, child labor laws and other progressive causes, Heyburn said companies had the right to hire workers of any age and keep them toiling from sunup to sundown. His law practice represented timber and mining interests. On their behalf, Heyburn reserved a special spite for Teddy Roosevelt's new forest reserves.

Federal forests, Heyburn said in newspaper editorials, were "an expensive, useless burden to the public," according to "The Big Burn," a history of the 1910 fires by Timothy Egan.

After the fires burned more than 3 million acres, killing 78 firefighters, Heyburn argued that big wildfires were the result of public ownership. Under private ownership, he said, the fires wouldn't have spread.

Heyburn's contempt for federal land is well documented. So it's ironic that Mount Heyburn, a 10,000-foot peak in

sent one of their own to Washington, D.C.

At the Capitol, Heyburn became an ally of Montana Sen. William Clark, one of that state's "Copper Kings." In 1907, Heyburn tried to block President Theodore Roosevelt from creating new national forests in the West. He put an amendment on a spending bill that kept Roosevelt from designating new federal forestland without congressional approval.

Roosevelt had a week to sign the bill. Before he signed it, the president added 16 million acres to the national forest system. An apoplectic Heyburn threatened to cut off agency funding.

Heyburn's skirmishes with Roosevelt and Forest Service

Hise, park manager. "But without him, we wouldn't have this park."

Heyburn's disdain of public lands didn't extend to national parks, which he saw as vehicles for tourism development. "I want in Idaho one national park," he told his Senate colleagues in March 1908.

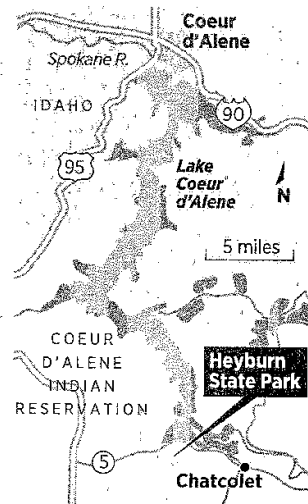
"Heyburn never spelled out what sort of national park he expected to develop, but it seemed highly probable that he anticipated a turn-of-the-century beach resort and genteel summer resort for excursionists," according to a park history.

Wealthy Spokane and Coeur d'Alene residents already visited the area for fishing and picnicking. "I don't think he was too concerned about a park for common, everyday working folks," Hise said. "He was looking at a high-end resort."

Congress established the park, but the members didn't support national park status for the area. Heyburn reluctantly accepted a compromise that allowed the state of Idaho to buy the land for \$11,400.

During its early years, Heyburn State Park functioned like a resort, with four bars and restaurants on site. Visitors stayed at 300 rental cabins.

In 1990, the park was reclassified from a "recreational park" to a "natural park," reflecting shifting public expectations. The park still has cabin sites, but the bars are gone. Contemporary visitors are looking for a natural experience, Hise said.



222



# Stephen Pyne, fire historian

By Becky Kramer

beckyk@spokesman.com, (208) 765-7122

Stephen Pyne, a history professor at Arizona State University, has written extensively about the 1910 fires. His books include "Fire in America" and "Year of the Fires," which describe how the nation's largest wildfire shaped the Forest Service's perception of fires for decades to come.

Wildfire, Pyne says, "became a hostile force to be fought to death." That view prevailed for more than 30 years, until the Forest Service's founding generation retired.

Pyne's interest in wildfires and fire policy grew out of the 15 summers he spent as a firefighter on the Grand Canyon's North Rim.

We caught up with him at a Society of American Foresters meeting in Wallace. Here is an edited version of the interview.

**Q.** Today we take a nuanced view toward wildfires. They're seen as a natural, though sometimes destructive part of the landscape. Why did so many early figures, including Gifford Pinchot, want to eradicate wildfires?

**A.** Wildfires were deliberately set on the frontier to clear land. It was like the burning of the rain forests in the Amazon or Indonesia - that was what the U.S. was like at the time. In the North Woods area around the (Great) Lake states, they ran a train in and logged it and burned it.

Now, we have almost a fire famine in some places, but other areas we have a feral fire that used to be tame and now has gone wild.

**A.** How did the 1910 Fire influence the Forest Service's fire policy?

**Q.** They weren't able to spend 10 years working through their decision because of the suddenness and shock of the Big Burn. It was sort of a 9/11 for the Forest Service. They're throwing firefighters into the caldron. They're dying and the agency is traumatized.

**Q.** Your books talk about the role that Gus Silcox (chief of the Forest Service from 1933 to 1939) played. How he helped solidify the agency's firefighting mission.

**A.** For Gus Silcox, the memory of the fires was very acute. He had written an article, published in November 1910, that the lesson of the fires was that they were wholly preventable. Now, he's chief. For several years, they have a series of enormous, record-setting fires in the backcountry. They haven't been able to do very much because they didn't have the money to build road and trails and staff them. So you have this fire occurring sort of in the domain of the 1910 fires that looks like a replay on a smaller, less lethal scale. He decided to re-fight the fires.

**Q.** That decision didn't come without debate.

**A.** No, Silcox actually convenes a conference with some of the best fire minds in the Forest Service. They meet in Missoula. Elers Koch of the Lolo National Forest, a veteran of 1910, got up and said, "You know, the land is worse off than when we took it over. We're not going to stop these fires and we're doing a lot of damage by trying to do it. We're building roads and lookouts in places where we shouldn't. We're just destroying the character of the place in the name of fire control."

**Q.** But the "put all fires out" view prevails.

**A.** Silcox opts for what becomes known as the 10 a.m. policy: Control by 10 o'clock the next morning following the report of the fire. If you failed to do that, then you would plan for 10 a.m. the next day and the next day until you got it.

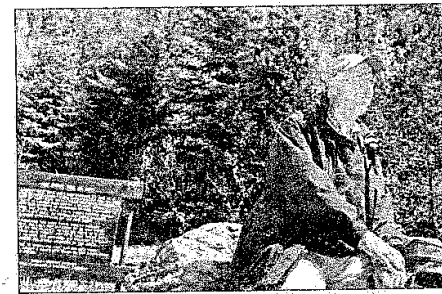
It was a simple mission; it was clear; it was easy to understand. It was administratively convenient. It said, "This is how you will be judged."

It was the same year we adopted Social Security. There was one, universal standard. (The Forest Service ended the 10 a.m. rule in 1978.)

**Q.** In hindsight, what kind of fire policy should they have adopted?

**A.** What we needed was a mix of things. We needed to be able to control fires. We needed to be able to light them at the right times and places. We probably needed to be able to back off and let fires have some room.

I think that's what would have happened in the absence of something like the Big Burn, because they would never have had the money or the political will at a high enough level to commit to firefighting.



CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON chrisa@spokesman.com

Stephen Pyne pauses at the head of the trail leading to the Puiski Tunnel outside Wallace.

Q-AND-A

TUESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2010

# SHOSHONE NEWS-PRESS

## Remembering the 1910 Fire



— Photos by NICOLE NOLAN

The 1910 Fire Commemoration Procession made its way through Wallace Saturday at 11 a.m. Representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Lands, Buffalo Soldiers National Museum, Coeur d'Alene Firefighters Pipes and Drums and Shoshone County Fire Districts marched in the procession in remembrance of the Great Fire that devoured the Silver Valley 100 years ago.

# Heroes, legacy of tragedy recalled 100 years later

By NICOLE NOLAN  
Staff writer

**WALLACE** — 'Ghosts of Fires Past' could be felt in the strong wind making its way through the streets of Wallace on Saturday, catching in the clothes and hair of residents and visitors alike who gathered to commemorate the great 1910 Fire.

"Heroes were born, loved ones were lost and history was made," County Commissioner Jon Cantamessa said Saturday, summing up the impact of the 1910 fire.

People of all ages lined the streets of Wallace for the 1910 Fire Commemoration procession, with the emotive notes of bagpipes sounding off the start of the route through Wallace shortly after 11 a.m.

Coeur d'Alene honor guard bearing the United States flag and the Idaho state flag protected by two shiny pulaskis led the procession, followed by representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), Buffalo Soldiers National Museum, Coeur d'Alene Firefighters Pipes and Drums, Kootenai County Fire and Rescue and Shoshone County Fire Districts.

The commemorative



— Photo by Diane Reifer

As a final presentation during the 1910 Fire Ceremony, three planes flew over the hills to the north of Wallace dumping red, white and blue water to commemorate 100 years and the lives of those who fought the flames.

procession also featured horses and mules from the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region Pack Train and a variety of trucks and red fire engines.

Following the parade, commemoration organizers found themselves with a larger crowd than expected. Attendees spilled out from the 500 chairs set up in the Wallace Visitor's Center parking

lot onto the surrounding lawn as Cantamessa took the stage to lead the 1910 Commemoration Ceremony.

Cantamessa noted that it is not customarily so windy in Wallace, but that it was fitting for that particular day, before introducing various dignitaries attending the ceremony.

"We have a vibrant community," Wallace Mayor Dick Vester said. "We owe a lot to the resil-

ience and fortitude of the citizens and firefighters of that time."

Gov. Butch Otter made an appearance, stressing the importance of forest health projects and their ability to create new jobs, new energy and foster the growth of healthy forests.

"Our history is young, it's still forming, it's still taking shape," said "The Big Burn" author Timothy Egan. "This little

valley is a monument to a very special time and extraordinary people."

He elaborated to say 1910 was the first time the entire nation had come together to fight fire as President William Taft deployed forces and resources to fight the "Big Blowup."

"We have now given those dead the honor they deserved."

224 see FIRE, A3

# FIRE from A1

U.S. Forest Service Fire and Aviation Director Tom Harbour followed to say that "death and destruction had joined hands and visited Wallace" on Aug. 20 and 21 in 1910.

"I'm a Forest Service firefighter and I'm proud of what we do," Harbour declared. "In my biased estimation, we are the best wild land firefighters in the world."

With the Coeur d'Alene Firefighters Pipes and Drums providing a fitting background, the colors were posted and the new Firefighter Memorial was unveiled.

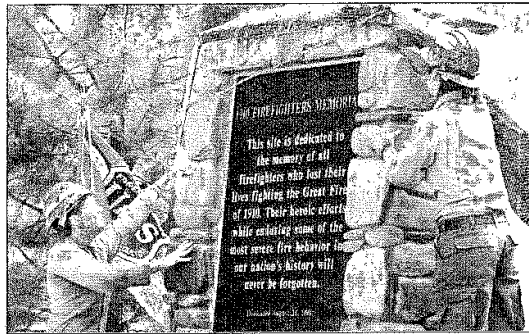
As a final tribute to wrap up the ceremony, three Idaho Department of Lands planes flew low over the hills to the north of Wallace and released red, white and blue water above the stark, green trees.

"It's sobering to reflect," said U.S. Rep. Walt Minnick after the ceremony. "It's also appropriate to comment on the fact that it was a catalyst to modern forestry, modern firefighting and recognizing that forest resources need to be managed, can be managed."

He added that 100 years later the Silver Valley is as productive and beautiful as it was before the 1910 Fire.

"It's a hopeful and an optimistic commemoration as well as a sober commemoration of loss and devastation."

Minnick added that active forest management is a win, win, win situation as it creates more jobs, establishes healthier forests and decreases the risks of catastrophic fires



— Photo by NICOLE NOLAN

**The 1910 Firefighters Memorial is unveiled during the 1910 Fire Commemoration Ceremony Saturday to the sounds of the Coeur d'Alene Firefighters Pipes and Drums. The new memorial stands at the Wallace Visitor's Center as a reminder of the human toll of the 1910 Fire.**

such of the magnitude of the 1910 Fire.

Forestry is an evolving science, and the good fire years followed by bad fire years can wreak havoc on the U.S. Forest Service's budget. Minnick said a bad fire year could force the U.S. Forest Service to borrow from the future and cripple its abilities in other areas for that year and succeeding years.

Within Congress he said

they are working hard for the U.S. Forest Service to have a dedicated and independently funded budget for firefighting.

U.S. Senator Mike Crapo added that an annual issue within Congress is congressional funding for firefighting. Congress never gives the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management enough funding so as to elimi-

nate their need to route funding away from other projects during a heavy fire season, according to Crapo. He hopes that in the near future they will create a more robust budget for firefighting that is less dependent upon congressional changes.

"The beauty of life, the beauty of tomorrow, is that we can still make a happy ending to this story," Harbour stated poignantly during the

ceremony, a fitting statement to set the tone for

not only Saturday, but the next 100 years.

Photo Courtesy of Wallace District Mining Museum

**1910 The Silver Valley Burns**

**-Fresh from the Printer  
and only  
\$5.00**

**401 Main St.  
Kellogg, ID 83837  
208-783-1101**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2010

# SHOSHONE NEWS-PRESS

## Fire hero Pulaski among those in Forest Cemetery

By DAVID COLE  
Hagadone News Network

**COEUR D'ALENE** — Ed Pulaski, a hero of the 1910 Fires, appeared at his gravesite Sunday. Well, actually Forest Service historian Steve Coady of Eugene, Ore., in costume and acting as Pulaski, appeared at the hero's gravesite during a tour of the historic Forest Cemetery here.

With his trusty firefighting Pulaski Tool at his side, Coady recounted the events of Aug. 20 and Aug. 21, 1910, when millions of acres of forest burned and about one-third of Pulaski's then-hometown of Wallace burned. Coady also discussed the role the young Forest Service had in responding to the fires that year.

Pulaski's headstone reads: Count Edward C. Pulaski, Feb.

2, 1931. The "count" was written at the request of Pulaski's wife, Emma, to honor her husband, Coady said.

Pulaski is best remembered for saving more than 40 firefighters during the "Big Burn" by hiding them in a mine adit, now called Pulaski Tunnel, as the raging firestorm left them with no escape on the side of a steep mountainside about 3 miles from

Wallace. At one point, Pulaski drew his pistol and threatened to shoot anyone who tried to run from the tunnel in panic.

"I think in the fire I was the only one to draw my revolver," said "Pulaski."

The Coeur d'Alene Public Library partnered with the city parks department to offer the tour.

see CEMETERY, A3



DAVID COLE/Hagadone News Network

Forest Service historian Steve Coady dresses the part of Ed Pulaski, hero of the 1910 Fires. Coady, playing Pulaski, told those on a historical tour of Forest Cemetery of the "Big Burn" and what it was like to be in the fledgling Forest Service 100 years ago this month. Pulaski is buried at the cemetery.

## CEMETERY from A1

The cemetery, at 1001 Government Way, was first owned by the U.S. Army from 1878 to 1901. It was used by Fort Sherman troops. The remains

of about 100 soldiers and their families were moved to Spokane in 1901 when Fort Sherman was closed.

The federal government deeded the original one-acre parcel and surrounding 19.7 acres to the city of Coeur d'Alene in 1905.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2010

# SHOSHONE NEWS-PRESS

## Pulaski Trail project completed



— Photo by NICOLE NOLAN

Pulaski Project Director Ron Roizen, right, points out the latest improvements made to the Pulaski Trail as part of the Pulaski Project along with Pulaski Project President Jim See, at left. The Pulaski Project Committee began the planning stages of conserving the trail in October 2002, and eight years later the final element has fallen into place to complete the Pulaski Trail renovations.

By NICOLE NOLAN  
Staff writer

**WALLACE** — It took eight years, but in that time the Pulaski Trail has undergone renovations that have transformed it from a neglected, washed out trail to the historical, national landmark commemorating the 1910 Fire it is today.

Although the final piece of the Pulaski Trail renovation fell into place after the centennial commemoration, it completes the visual storyboard of an event remembered as a time of heroism and change for the U.S. Forest Service.

The Pulaski Trail sits mostly on private land and had been left for Mother Nature to reclaim. A gathering of citizens on Oct. 31, 2002, marked the begin-

ning of an effort to take the trail back and launch it into national fame as a historical landmark.

In cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, the Pulaski Project Committee worked to clean up the trail, install bridges, erect informational signs and redesign the trail head and the destination loop. As simple as this may sound, the project lasted years as grants were written, cooperation was sought and a consensus reached regarding every detail of the renovations.

"The committee consisted of movers and shakers interested in saving the trail and preserving a national gem," explained Pulaski Project President Jim See.

see PULASKI, A4

## PULASKI from A1

Archaeologists initiated a dig at the end of the trail in July 2008 to discover artifacts from the Aug. 20 and 21, 1910, fire so they would not be disturbed by development in the area as the renovation project entered its final stages.

"Deep in the heart of this project is a crisis in the memory of the forests of the Northwest," said Ron Roizen, Pulaski Project director. The 1910 Fire elevated fire protection to a No. 1 priority within the U.S. Forest Service, but now he worries politics and conflicting views may be getting in the way of maintaining healthy, growing forests.

"Retelling the story from the beginning is a way to draw attention to what we need to do."

Funding that made the Pulaski Project possible was made available through various grants from Idaho Parks and Recreation, the U.S. Forest Service, the Inland Northwest Community Foundation, the Idaho Community Foundation, the Frank A. Morbeck Community Foundation, Inc. and

various other grants.

In 2004 the Pulaski Project Committee even received approximately \$298,000 in appropriations through Idaho Sen. Larry Craig's office.

"This is a national treasure here," See explained, estimating that renovations totaled almost \$1 million. The use of helicopters was enlisted by the U.S. Forest Service, while materials and labor were funded by the Pulaski Project Committee. All efforts went to restoring the dignity and artistry of the Pulaski Trail and its history.

The money and labor that went into revamping

the trail is visible immediately upon approaching the trail head on Forest Service Road 456. What used to be a gravel area to pull off and park has been transformed into a small parking area complete with a rest room. The first bridge of the trail was brought in pre-fabricated, lowered into place by cranes. Safety measures were taken as fencing and rock walls were created along the trail.

At the final destination of the Pulaski Trail a recreated adit was installed at the mine entrance, following the archaeology study. Cable fencing was repaired and near the

trailhead a guest register and donation box was installed.

Informational plaques made of impregnated porcelain guide trail visitors through Edward "Big Ed" Pulaski's journey to safety during the 1910 Fire. The installation of the placard at the Pulaski Trail head, which cost approximately \$20,000, marks the last of the planned improvements to the Pulaski Trail.

"It (the plaque) was a product of near constant warfare amongst ourselves," Roizen admitted. Roizen laughed that the map of the Pulaski Trail highlighted on the

plaque breaks major rules in cartography as the map had been rotated for west to take the place of the north direction. Every photograph used and every bit of text written on the completed plaque had been contested, as all involved in the design were in search for a perfect finished product that would persist through the decades, as it was physically built to do.

"For all intents and purposes, it's finished," See said. "It's one of the best trails-interpretive trails in the United States."

However, this does not mark the end of

the Pulaski Project Committee as they now move to discuss possible projects for the future. Proposed projects include everything from creating brochures and trail maintenance to the creation of a Pulaski/Modern Firefighter statue and city signs highlighting the trail.

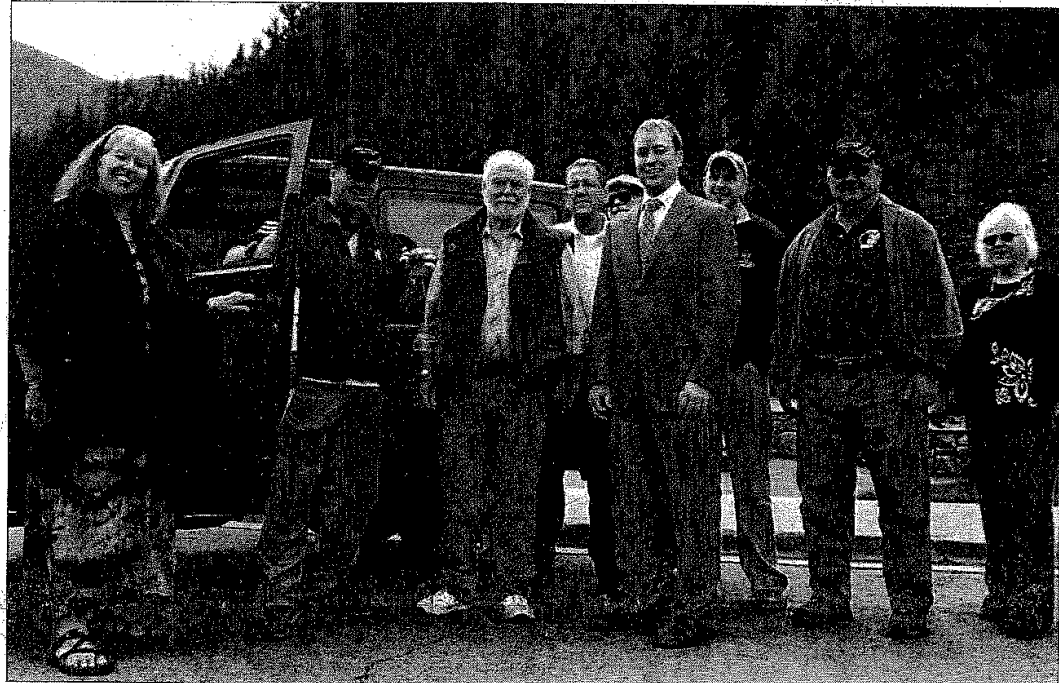
According to Roizen and See there are always improvements that can be made, maintenance to be continued and new ideas to be implemented.

"This is really the product of consensus and mutual historical appreciation," Roizen said.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2010

# SHOSHONE NEWS-PRESS

## Fire committee raffles off Jeep



— Photo by NICOLE NOLAN

The 1910 Fire Commemoration Committee handed over the keys Thursday to their specially decorated Jeep Wrangler to raffle winner Brian Kliesen of San Antonio, Texas. Pictured from left: Linn Reese, Brian Kliesen, Forest VanDorn, Shoshone County Fire Protection District II Fire Chief Dale Costa, Jim See, Dave Smith Motors General Manager Eric Smith, Kjell Truesdell of the Idaho Department of Lands, John Specht and Denise Vuncannon.

## U.S. Forest Service worker an appropriate winner

By NICOLE NOLAN  
Staff writer

**WALLACE** — A more fitting scenario could not have been orchestrated as fate played a hand in the 1910 Fire Commemoration committee raffle for the commemorative Jeep.

The name on the winning raffle ticket — Brian Kliesen, a permanent-seasonal employee of the U.S. Forest Service.

Kliesen, of San Antonio, Texas, arrived in Wallace on Thursday to accept keys to his new 2010 Jeep from the 1910 Fire Commemoration committee. The 1910 Fire stimulated monumental change within the U.S. Forest Service, and of 475 raffle tickets sold a U.S. Forest Service employee had been selected. Fate had most certainly intervened to honor the significant events of the service in years past and the men and women who make up the service in the present and future.

The idea for the raffle originated within the mind of Forest VanDorn, 1910 Fire Commemoration Committee member.

"We were trying to figure out ways to make money to get the monument together," VanDorn said. After conversing with the Smiths at Dave Smith Motors in Kellogg, he was able to transform his idea into reality with the aid of the dealership and fellow 1910 Fire Commemoration committee members.

The red, hard-top Jeep Wrangler had been painted by Dave Smith Motors to feature black shaded flames on the hood and sides of the vehicle. Large stickers on the rear passenger windows also help spread the word about the 1910 Fire events as the vehicle is driven about for all to see.

According to VanDorn, the Jeep was purchased from Dave Smith Motors for \$20,000. The local car dealership had shaved off approximately \$3,500 from the price tag to aid in the profitability of the fundraising raffle.

"We had a late start," VanDorn said, estimating that the committee made a couple thousand dollars in profit from the raffle to go toward the 1910 Fire Memorial.

"Had we thought about it early on it would have been better. But it was a good promotional thing to get people interested (in the 1910 Fire events)."

1910 Fire Jeep owner Kliesen had only bought his raffle ticket the day before the drawing. He had been following the 1910 Fire Commemoration events closely upon reading "The Big Burn" by Timothy Egan through a wildland fire community website, unable to attend personally due to his active status as an Army reservist.

"This is a very worthy cause," Kliesen remembered thinking as he purchased the raffle ticket. "It's really important that we as an agency don't forget our history. The 1910 Fire was a defining moment — it (developed) the Forest Service into the agency that it is today."

He described U.S. Forest Ranger Edward Pulaski as the epitome of what he considers to be the ultimate forest ranger.

"He's the classic John Wayne version of a forest ranger," Kliesen said. "We, as an agency, need to get back to our roots."

When he received a phone message the day after purchasing the ticket stating that he had won the raffle, his original reaction was that of disbelief. He contacted VanDorn and realized that he had in fact won a Jeep, although he joked that his wife may not believe him until the Jeep is sitting in their driveway.

Although the 1910 Fire Commemoration events were in August and the Jeep raffle has drawn to a close, the 1910 Fire Committee continues work collecting letters and memorabilia to place in the 1910 Fire Memorial time capsule.

"We would like anybody that has any letters or family from that time period with memorabilia to copy and put it in the capsule," VanDorn said. The committee already has video footage of the 1910 Fire Commemoration events from August and will add information regarding the Jeep raffle to the capsule.

Items will be collected for the time capsule until August 2011, when the capsule will be sealed for 100 years.