

## Fishing trip puts ODF employee into rescue mode

Rod Nichols, ODF Agency Affairs Specialist

In his 37 years with the Oregon Department of Forestry, Don Sohler couldn't recall ever taking time off at the peak of the wildfire season. But when he met up with his longtime backpacking partners at Frances Lake in August, his firefighting know-how was about to come into play.

Near the close of a leisurely day of fishing at the mountain lake in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, the calm was broken suddenly when a hiker approached the party. Her 80-year-old father had fractured his leg descending a steep slope on the other side of the lake.

As the woman pointed out the accident site on a map, the tight contour lines spoke "helicopter extraction" to the veteran fire aviation manager. It was the only way to rescue the injured man safely. So sheer was the site that the pilot would need to hover and lift him aboard by winch. Only the Salem-based Oregon Air National Guard had that capability.

Sohler quickly hiked up the trail a mile-and-a-half to where a single bar showed on his cell phone and called the Union County dispatch center. Dropping names of local emergency response personnel he had worked with on fires, Sohler persuaded the center manager to request a Blackhawk medevac helicopter from the Guard.

The next morning after a four-hour hike along the rocky slope where the man lay, Sohler read coordinates from his GPS over the phone to the dispatcher, who relayed them to the ship via radio. This was a familiar task, similar to guiding a bucket-slipping helicopter to a hot spot on a wildfire.

Soon the medevac pilot was hovering above the downed hiker, and the final phase of the operation got underway.

Today Sohler looks back on the vacation/wilderness rescue with gratitude, knowing that his years in firefighting had paid the ultimate dividend: a saved life. 🍷



**Photo, right:** Working with the Union County dispatch center, Sohler was successful in obtaining a Blackhawk medevac helicopter to carry the injured hiker to safety.



ODF's Don Sohler, above, spent a leisurely day fishing Frances Lake in the Eagle Lake Wilderness (center photo). Relying on skills learned as a fire aviation manager, Sohler wound up playing a key role in the rescue of an injured hiker.



# Department's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday calls for celebration

Dan Postrel, ODF Agency Affairs Director

2011 marks the Oregon Department of Forestry's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. It's a great milestone, and an opportunity to take stock of our collective history and accomplishments, as well as the importance of Oregon's forests.

Various activities are planned, with an emphasis on paying for the observance with donated funds and efforts, and through the sale of commemorative items.

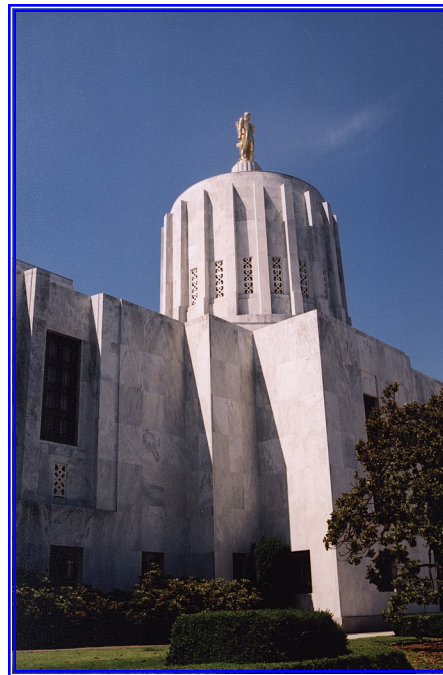
The Oregon Forestry Retirees Association is enthusiastically involved. Activities include the production and sale of a book, written by retiree Jim Fisher, tracing the department's history,

and production of a commemorative Postal Service envelope and cancellation, coordinated by retiree Alan Maul.

Items available for sale also will include a 2011 calendar packed with images and information about the department's 100 years of service.

An event is being planned for February 23, 2011, at the state Capitol, and a Governor's proclamation observing the centennial has been requested.

During the centennial year, the department's logo will sport a special banner noting this Landmark. The department's 100th birthday also will be featured prominently at the 2011 Oregon State Fair. 🌲



**A special event to celebrate the Department's 100th birthday is slated for February 23, 2011 at the state Capitol, and may include a tree planting.**

**For more info: Dan Postrel, 503-945-7420.**

## Need Seedlings ??

Oregon Department of Forestry's **Private Forests Program** can help private landowners connect with forest nurseries that grow and sell seedlings suitable for planting projects. Seedlings from wild, improved or disease resistant seed sources are also available.

Check out this year's seedling catalog online:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/privateforests/docs/ForestNurserySeedlingSources.pdf>  
or call 503-945-7502 for more information.

## Now is a great time to think about tree care and winter storms

Winter storm events can take a heavy toll on many trees in Oregon landscapes, but when dealing with a storm's aftermath, arborists advise caution.

There are two common mistakes people make when trying to clean up after a storm. The first is over-pruning or topping trees, the second is trying to save trees that are likely to become hazardous.

Certified arborists throughout Oregon know that many of Oregon's older landscape trees still bear the scars of the 1962 Columbus Day storm - when many trees were "topped" or improperly pruned as an over-reaction to tree damage.

Topping - the practice of removing large branches and tops of trees - creates trees more likely to become hazardous. A topped tree is much more likely to break or fall in a storm than a tree that has a normal branch structure.

Doing the right things after trees have been damaged can make the difference between giving trees a good chance of survival or losing them unnecessarily.

"Homeowners should use caution when selecting a tree service company," says ODF's Paul Ries, who manages the state's urban and community forestry program. Ries recommends using an arborist whose name and company are familiar to your community

- even if that means waiting longer for service.

There's usually a reason for a tree's failure. Trees that have been topped in the past, have had their roots cut close to the trunk, or have internal decay from poor pruning are all good candidates for becoming hazardous during a storm. In short, every winter produces tree casualties, but if your tree has been well cared-for, it should get through the winter without hurting you or your home.

Lastly: just because a tree is tall does not mean it will fail. Says Ries, "be careful not to overreact or you may end up removing valuable shade trees that may take years to replace."

The Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Association of Arborists (PNW-ISA) maintains a list of certified arborists for hire on their web site: [www.pnwisaweb.org/promotional\\_directory/](http://www.pnwisaweb.org/promotional_directory/)



Properly pruned trees like the one above are less likely to become hazardous as they age.

## news briefs

### Harry Merlo: Oregon's Tree Farmer of the Year

A long-time leader of the forest products industry has been named Oregon's Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year for 2010. The Oregon Tree Farm System recognized Harry Merlo during a November ceremony at the World Forestry Center in Portland.

Merlo owns and manages the 12,000 acre MC Ranch twenty miles southwest of La Grande in Union County. About 8,500 acres of the property is forest, managed with a goal of long-term recreational use and sustain-

able forestry. The forest supports a diverse range of wildlife, including salmon habitat in the 4 ½ miles of the Grande Ronde River that flows through the ranch.

Merlo is recognized within Oregon as a philanthropist and an advocate of forestry education. Merlo founded the World Forest Institute in 1989. The MC Ranch actively promotes tree farming, hosting tours for World Forest Institute Fellows that provide an opportunity for local forestry professionals to share United States forest practice

concepts with a global audience.

The Oregon Department of Forestry, an active partner of the Oregon Tree Farm System, helps landowners manage their forestlands to ensure that family-owned tree farms achieve economic, environmental and social benefits. More information on the Oregon Tree Farm System is available at [www.otfs.org](http://www.otfs.org).



L— R: US Forest Service Deputy Regional Forester Cal Joyner, Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year Harry Merlo, and Acting State Forester Nancy Hirsch at the November ceremony.

Photo by Kevin Weeks, ODF.

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"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

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Find more articles and news at  
[www.oregon.gov/odf](http://www.oregon.gov/odf)

### Forest Nurseries

Want to be a part of our seedling catalog?  
Or, are you looking for tree seed to purchase?

Learn more online:

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/privateforests/SeedBank.shtml>

Or call 503-945-7502 for more information.

## To our readers



Nancy Hirsch, Acting  
State Forester

Dear readers –

The past few months have been a time of transition, regrouping and moving forward, and the pace of change promises to remain brisk in this new year. In 2011, the Legislature and Oregon's new Governor will make decisions that will help shape the future of state government in an era of reduced revenues.

We are also seeing change in leadership at the Department of Forestry, with the resignation of Marvin Brown as State Forester. His contributions during his seven years with the Department were many, including his vision in acquisition of the new Gilchrist State Forest, and his determination to make us a more efficient, forward-looking organization.

At the Board of Forestry's request, I have left my position as Chief of the State Forests Division to serve as acting State Forester. The Board has launched its recruitment for a new State Forester. The process includes a nationwide search and opportunities for public input, with the goal of having a new State Forester on board early in 2011.

In the meantime, we are moving forward, working with our stakeholders to prepare for the 2011 legislative session, and operating our programs efficiently with the resources available to us.

So although we are in the midst of major change, there is continuity as well. Forests remain essential to Oregon's wellbeing, and we remain committed to doing all we can to protect them and support their sustainable management.

All the best,  
Nancy Hirsch