



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Private contractors quickly provide vital people and equipment to help fight Oregon's wildfires

Sweet Home, Ore.—Feller bunchers, dozers, water tenders and other specialized equipment play a key role in the initial attack and suppression of Oregon's wildfires. Much of that equipment is provided by local operators under a contract agreement with the Oregon Department of Forestry.

"One piece of equipment can do the work of a 40-person crew," said Craig Pettinger, Oregon Department of Forestry's interim district forester for its South Cascade district. "It's not just the equipment but the experienced operators who know the equipment and the terrain of the local area that make them so effective."

The operators sign up their people and equipment through ODF's Incident Resources Agreement (IRA) program. Applications are typically accepted April through June each year. IRA contractors may select to work within specific ODF geographic areas, or under statewide ODF jurisdiction.

"We participate with ODF's coordinated response to wildfires to help protect the communities our people live and work in, to limit damage to Oregon's forests and to preserve our investment in our timberland," said Kenny Rose, Chief Forester for Giustina Resources. "We were part of the initial attack on the Lane 1 Fire and still have equipment there. We are providing a rotary feller buncher, several dozers and large water tender."

The contractors' depth of knowledge and speed of their mobilization are two critical components they bring to fighting wildfires.

"I can pick up the phone and give them a call and literally have them on-scene in minutes and a full array of resources within a few hours," said Pettinger. "That's exactly what we did at the start of the Lane 1 Fire. That fire did expand very quickly in the first 48-hours and if not for those resources it could have been much worse."

Although IRA contractors are used primarily on ODF jurisdiction fires, occasionally they may be requested and used on federal fires. That was the case for the Pyramid Fire south of Detroit Lake in the Willamette National Forest.

"We opened up 24-miles of old forest roads and built six-miles of 80-foot-wide fuel breaks," said Milt Moran, President, Cascade Timber Consulting. "I've been in the forestry business for 50 years and that was one of the nastiest fires we have worked on. Our people were out there at 9:30 p.m. working on roads with trees lighting up and snags falling all around. It's inherently dangerous for everyone fighting a fire. However, we always put safety first and work together to get after these wildfires as quick as we can."

IRA contractors are required to have various levels of training and safety equipment depending on the type of services they provide. It's not just heavy equipment and operators; IRA contractors can provide hand-crews, radio operator, mobile food services, medical services and more.

“When we can work together, industry, large landowners and state forestry, that’s when the partnership really shines.” Jay Christensen from Weyerhaeuser said. Weyerhaeuser is a private landowner with an IRA contract who has supported the agency in wildfire suppression multiple times. Most recently, they’ve supported the Lane 1 Fire outside of Cottage Grove from the beginning and are still working in partnership with ODF’s Incident Management Team 1. “We understand our road system, we understand the ground.” Christensen said.

“These IRA resources are critical for us to fight these fires,” said Pettinger. “They are efficient, effective, and a vital part of the wildfire attack and suppression effort.”

For more information on the IRA Program visit the [ODF website](#).

For update on current wildfire go to the [ODF current wildfire information page](#).