



Rangeland Fire Protection Associations

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs), volunteer groups of landowners who protect their properties and neighboring lands from wildfires; play a vital role in safeguarding 17.5 million acres of rural private and public land, including 5.7 million acres that would otherwise lack fire protection.

Annual Newsletter | 2024



Post-Paulina RFPA preparing to engage in the Powell Fire, (which later became part of the Rail Ridge Fire), September 4, 2024.

Photo by Allen Teskey, Blue Mountain Ranch

Record Oregon Wildfires Test Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, Proving Their Worth in 2024



Burnt River RFPA engine and dozer working on the Durkee Fire. Burnt River, Vale, Ironside and Lookout-Glasgow RFPAs collectively contributed 65 pieces of equipment and 8,000 personnel hours to suppression efforts on the 294,265 acre Durkee Fire between July 17-30, 2024.

“Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) have displayed commendable efforts during this trying time helping protect their neighbors’ lives and livelihoods to the risk of their own.”

US Senator Merkley, US Senator Wyden, Congressmen in an August 1, 2024 letter to the US Department of Agriculture.

2024 marked a year of extreme fire behavior in Oregon, evidenced by a record 1.9 million acres burned and 6 megafires over 100,000 acres. Eastern Oregon bore the brunt of the destruction, with fires consuming 1.7 million acres where RFPAs operated amid the devastation. While the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Department of Forestry, and the US Forest Service struggled with insufficient resources to manage the fires, RFPAs committed all their resources to protect their land, livelihoods, and communities. They demonstrated their value through multiple successful initial attacks when no agency resources were available. Their actions prevented tens to hundreds of thousands of additional acres from burning across major fires, including Little Valley, Cow Valley, Durkee, Town Gulch, Hole in the Ground, Falls, Telephone, Lone Rock, Crazy Creek, Shoe Fly, Rail Ridge and others.

RFPAs and cooperators conducted after-action reviews, which confirmed that investments in training, equipment, and relationships had succeeded. Though landowners suffered significant losses, RFPA efforts prevented even greater destruction. Cooperators also noted that additional funding for better equipment and maintenance, along with enhanced support coordinating with Incident Management Teams, could help RFPAs operate more safely and effectively in the future.

Support and Recognition for Rangeland Fire Protection Associations

The fires of 2024 exceeded most associations’ capacity, overwhelming their volunteer members, equipment and budgets. As firefighting operations stretched across weeks, associations depleted their funds. Members drew from their personal finances to maintain equipment and protect their property and communities. AgWest, Walmart, Roundhouse Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, Marathon Pipeline, Carson Oil, and numerous local businesses and community members offered timely and generous donations, which replenished exhausted bank accounts and boosted members’ morale and equipment safety. News media, fire agencies, and local, state, and federal officials recognized RFPAs’ contributions. State Representative Mark Owens has introduced HB 3349 and 3350 in the 2025 legislative session to increase Oregon’s support and funding for RFPAs.



Governor’s Wildfire Advisor Doug Grafe, ODF Rangeland Fire Program Coordinator Allison Rayburn and State Senator Lynn Findley present Warner Valley RFPA President John O’Keeffe with the 2024 Outstanding Neighbor Award.



Statewide Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP) Coordinator Skip Morton makes field visit to Frenchglen, visits with RFPA president Gary Miller and his son, Levi about the value of FEPP equipment.

Grants Provide \$238,720 to Rangeland Fire Protection Associations

RFPAs rely heavily on Volunteer Fire Capacity Grants for their financial viability. These grants fund firefighting equipment, supplies, personal protective equipment, and safety maintenance. In 2024, rural fire departments and RFPAs could receive a maximum award of \$10,000, with 13 RFPAs receiving a total of \$123,720. The 2024 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Volunteer Fire Capacity program offered an additional one-time opportunity, providing up to \$20,000 for slip-on tanks. Seven RFPAs secured \$115,000 from this supplemental funding.



A slip on tank that fits in truck bed. Filled with water it provides another water source for dousing fires.

RFPAs Bolstered by Equipment Allocation and Resourceful Repurposing of Other Equipment

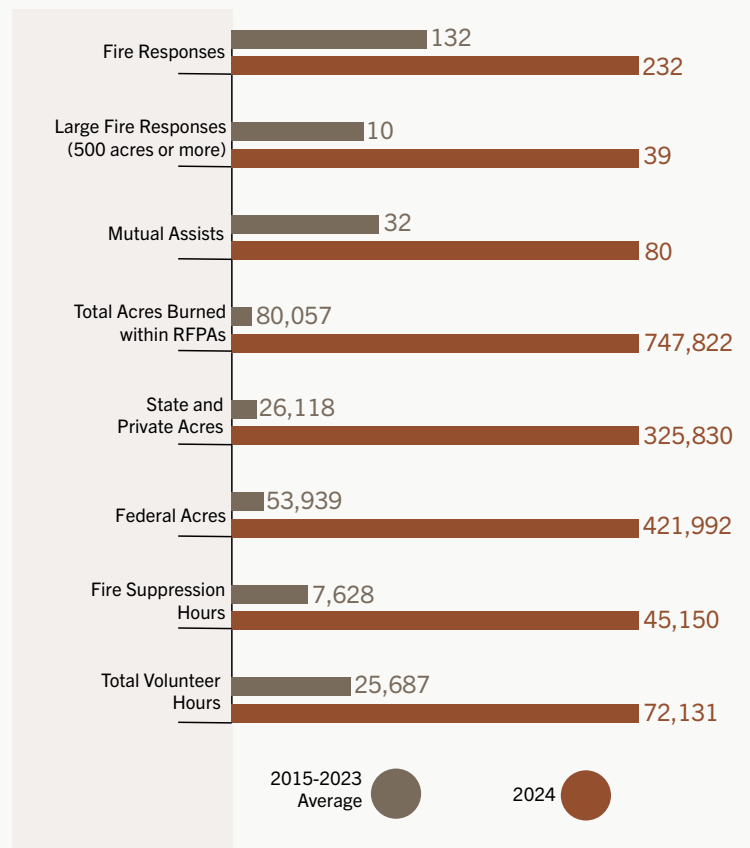
Despite managing a busy training season and a historic fire season, ODF Rangeland Fire Program personnel allocated 27 new pieces of rolling stock (i.e. dozers, tenders, engines), including two large bulldozers to RFPAs. The associations transformed military trucks and Humvees into capable off-road fire engines, including the cab-over truck shown in the background. They also acquired several federal surplus engines from the Forest Service and BLM. Salem Oregon Department of Forestry equipment screener, Charles (Skip) Morton, makes this surplus equipment possible through his tireless work. Morton identifies equipment, investigates its condition, and arranges shipping to deliver usable fire trucks to the Rangeland Associations.

The Coos Forest Protection Association and their local fire department cooperators demonstrated “Neighbors Helping Neighbors” by donating two water tenders, extending support from one corner of the state to the other. Vale RFPA put the donated Freightliner, shown in the photo foreground, to immediate use for several weeks straight on the Cow Valley and Durkee Fires.



One of two tenders Coos Forest Protective Association generously donated to RFPAs in 2024.

2024 RFPA Firefighting Contributions









Watch

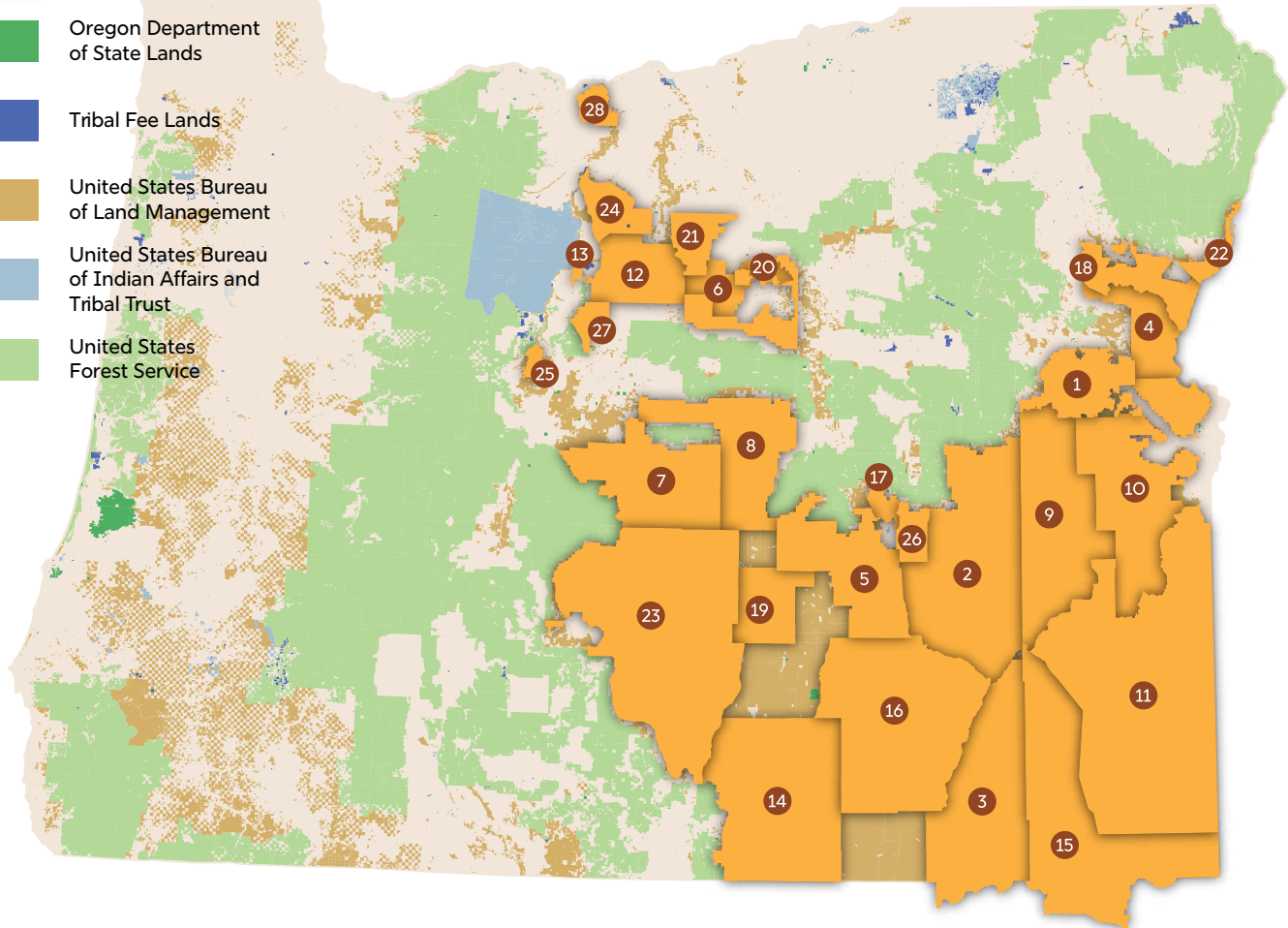
[Rangeland Fire Protection Associations \(RFPA\) Fire Season 2024](#)

Click the link above to watch and hear from Mark McBride (Vale RFPA), Jeff Burkhardt (Vale and Ironside RFPAs) and Levi Bunch (Burnt River RFPA) reflect on the 2024 fire season.

Oregon Rangeland Fire Protection Associations

28 RFPAs consist of 1,200 volunteer members across 9 counties in eastern Oregon. 800 are trained firefighters and 400 provide support.

-  Range Fire Protection Associations
-  Oregon Department of State Lands
-  Tribal Fee Lands
-  United States Bureau of Land Management
-  United States Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Trust
-  United States Forest Service



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| 1. Ironside RFPA, Malheur Co. est. 1964 | 15. Blue Mountain RFPA, Malheur Co. est. 2013 |
| 2. Crane RFPA, Harney Co. est. 1998 | 16. Frenchglen RFPA, Harney Co. est. 2013 |
| 3. Fields-Andrews RFPA, Harney Co. est. 1998 | 17. Lone Pine RFPA, Harney Co. est. 2013 |
| 4. Burnt River RFPA, Baker Co. est. 2000 | 18. Lookout-Glasgow RFPA, Baker Co. est. 2014 |
| 5. Silver Creek RFPA, Harney Co. est. 2001 | 19. Wagonfire RFPA, Harney Co. est. 2015 |
| 6. Twickenham RFPA, Wheeler Co. est. 2001 | 20. WC Ranches RFPA, Wheeler Co. est. 2015 |
| 7. Brothers-Hampton RFPA, Crook, Deschutes Co. est. 2006 | 21. Wheeler County Fire & Rescue RFPA, Wheeler Co. est. 2016 |
| 8. Post-Paulina RFPA, Crook, Deschutes, & Harney Co. est. 2006 | 22. Greater Pine Valley RFPA, Baker Co. est. 2016 |
| 9. Juntura RFPA, Malheur Co. est. 2007 | 23. High Desert RFPA, Lake Co. est. 2018 |
| 10. Vale RFPA, Malheur Co. est. 2008 | 24. Bakeoven-Shaniko RFPA, Wasco Co. est. 2019 |
| 11. Jordan Valley RFPA, Malheur Co. est. 2008 | 25. Lower Bridge RFPA, Deschutes & Jefferson Co. est. 2022 |
| 12. Ashwood-Antelope RFPA, Jefferson, Wasco Co. est. 2009 | 26. North Harney RFPA, Harney Co. est. 2022 |
| 13. Gateway RFPA, Jefferson Co. est. 2010 | 27. Grizzly RFPA, Jefferson Co. est. 2023 |
| 14. Warner Valley RFPA, Lake Co. est. 2011 | 28. Petersburg RFPA, Wasco Co. est. 2023 |

Oregon Department of Forestry supports Rangeland Fire Protection Associations through administrative guidance and cost reimbursement, fire suppression training, facilitating access to federal grants and surplus fire fighting equipment.



For more Information:
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