

HB 3349 and HB 3350

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

Hello, I am Ron Whiting, a rancher in Burns, Oregon, and Chairman of Lone Pine Rangeland Fire Protection Association. Lone Pine RFPA is situated north of Burns, and is one of the smaller RFPAs consisting of about 15 members and a district of 55,000 acres that we protect.

Since our inception in 2013 we have put out numerous small fires that had the potential to become large. We have worked hard to cooperate with the other local fire fighting agencies. We have reciprocal agreements with the BLM and USFS whereby we can operate on each others land and can be first responders or assist as needed. We also respond to ODF protected land and extinguish fires before they arrive on scene. We conduct annual trainings with each others agencies.

2024 was a huge challenge to us. The Falls Fire didn't start on our district, it was to the west of us on USFS land. When it reached us it had a front six miles long on our border and had grown to 50,000 plus acres. Over the next week Lone Pine RFPA firefighters worked hard alongside of our local government firefighters and contract firefighters to halt the spread of the fire on the southeast corner of the fire. Often times our RFPA personnel were the only ones out there because forces were stretched so thin. I personally had two different times that I put in 36 hours without sleep. One night alone our dozer built 6 miles of fire containment line crossing BLM, private, ODF protected property, and USFS property. After our dozer met a USFS dozer on the other end, it turned back to construct a double wide line, thus traveling 12 miles while constructing line in one night. This was just one night of several. Thankfully, we were able to confine the fire to the north end of our district, and halted its spread to the south. If containment hadn't been successful, it could have potentially burned our entire district plus threatened or burned homes to the south.

The next month was put in dousing the hot spots near the fire lines so that the fire couldn't rekindle. We contributed a total of 1500 plus volunteer hours on this fire.

The labor we volunteer freely. The monetary cost of fighting the fires and maintaining our equipment we cover from grants and voluntary dues, but these costs are becoming tremendous. As fires continue to grow in size and frequency, our association will be hard pressed to continue to provide the service that it does. That is why we need the support offered by HB 3349 and HB 3350. Please support these bills to help us and to help our neighboring Oregonians.

I have included a few photos to illustrate what our RFPA was faced with on the Falls Fire, our actions in fighting it, some of the fire fighting equipment that we have put together to deal with fires, plus one of our joint training days with our neighbor RFPA North Harney, the local BLM and Forest Service, and ODF fire forces.

Sincerely,  
Ronald Whiting  
Chairman, Lone Pine RFPA



July 13, 2024. The day that the Falls Fire burned up to the Lone Pine boundary on the west and jumped onto us on the north. This is just one corner of a 6 mile front.



July 15, 2024. The day the fire blows up on Lone Pine and progresses to the south.



July 16, 2024. 5:00 am. Building fire containment line with our dozer. We have built 6 miles of line, met up with a Forest Service dozer on the other end, and are heading back to the beginning doubling up on the line width.





July 18, 2024, 6:00 am. Sunrise. Building more fire containment line. We have been at it all night and have several more hours to go.



Our Humvee fire engine on the fire.





Annual fire training using one of our fire engines that was built on a used military chassis.



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