PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF AMERICA’S FORESTS
A Case for Strong Interagency Partnerships

By William M. Ciesla
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Forest insects and diseases do not recognize land ownership boundaries. Should an outbreak of a damaging pest develop on lands of one ownership, chances are that neighboring lands of different ownerships with the same a mix of tree species, age classes and site conditions will be similarly affected.

This aspect of forest insect and disease management was recognized in the Forest Pest Control Act of 1947, which gave the Department of Agriculture authority to provide leadership to forest insect and disease management on all federally administered lands as well as state and private lands. This also set the stage for strong partnerships with other Federal Departments, with state forestry agencies and with private landowners.

See PARTNERSHIPS, page 3
Dear Friends,

This has been a busy Fall at the Museum. I started my new position as Executive Director August 1st and am proud to be a part of such a meaningful organization.

The Museum is diligently working toward our goal to raise the additional funding needed to build our National Conservation Legacy and Education Center in Missoula. This world class museum will showcase the history of the USFS and it’s conservation legacy. **This is an important story for the world to hear.**

We have many supporters and partners- but we need more to make this vision a reality.

In August, the Board of Directors met in Welches, Oregon, which is also where we held our Annual Membership meeting. It was great to see the hard work the Board has been engaged in, and to see so many interested supporters attend the Annual Meeting.

Immediately upon returning to Missoula, the Museum held a creative thinking workshop with area educators and community leaders. This Google CSI (Creative Skills for Innovation) Lab was facilitated by Tawney Hughes, a Missoula native and Google Program Manager for North and Latin America. Many exciting ideas were presented to help build the Museum’s awareness and educational goals.

There is still much to do, and we could not do our important work without the help and support of our membership. Thank you for your support!

Lisa Tate  
*Executive Director, National Museum of Forest Service History*
Initially, implementation of the Forest Pest Control Act was assigned to USDA’s Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine and the Bureau of Plant Pathology. In 1954, these duties were transferred to the Forest Service and initially assigned to the research stations. In 1961, responsibility for insect and disease detection surveys, evaluations and technical assistance to control programs was transferred to the Regions.

The passage of the Forest Pest Control Act, shortly after the end of World War II, set the stage for an aerial forest insect and disease detection program. At the end of World War II, a lot of military trained pilots were available who wanted to continue flying and were seeking employment opportunities.

In addition, some aerial surveys for mapping insect and disease damage had been conducted on a piecemeal basis both in Canada and the U.S. since the 1920s. Following the passage of the Forest Pest Control Act, a systematic aerial survey of all forest lands in Oregon and Washington began.

Other parts of the U.S. soon followed suit and aerial surveys for detection and mapping of forest damage became the norm. In the West, these surveys are typically conducted during July and August, when most damage signatures, especially bark beetles and defoliating insects, are visible. In the East, where growing seasons are longer, aerial surveys tend to be pest specific and are conducted when the damage of a given pest (e.g. gypsy moth, southern pine beetle, spruce budworm) is at its peak.

Over the years’ aerial surveys for detection and assessment of forest insect and disease damage evolved from rather informal reconnaissance surveys, where data were recorded on paper maps and not much attention was given to safety. Today, all aerial observers, federal and state, undergo aviation safety training, which qualifies them to be fixed-wing aviation managers. They retake this training every three years. All survey aircraft are equipped with automated flight following (AFF) systems that automatically transmit their location to Forest Service dispatch centers every two minutes.

See PARTNERSHIPS, page 4
In addition, mapping standards have been developed and today, aerial survey data are recorded on touch screen computers equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) that show the location of the survey aircraft on the screen. Resultant data are now analyzed and stored in digitally using geographic information systems (GIS). These data are available to all participating agencies as well as the general public. Aerial survey teams typically meet before each survey season to review changes in safety protocols, mapping standards and conduct practice flights.

Aircraft used for these surveys may be owned or leased by the Forest Service or state forestry agencies. In at least one case, a Partnavia P-68, a twin engine, high wing aircraft owned by the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, was used for the aerial forest health survey of Oregon for a number of years.

One of the provisions of the Forest Pest Control Act was to provide funding for insect and disease suppression on all forest lands. These reimbursements were made through the respective state forestry agency.

In the early years of the Forest Pest Control Act, several of the larger state forestry agencies, such as Maine, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Oregon and Washington already had viable forest pest management programs. During the 1960’s several states lobbied for reimbursement of a portion of the “recurring costs” of forest insect and disease management, specifically costs of surveys, evaluations and technical assistance carried out under the terms of the Forest Pest Control Act. This was ultimately agreed to, and Cooperative Forest Pest Action Programs were established, with participating states each initially receiving a grant of $15,000. In order to qualify for the program, a state forestry agency agreed to assign an individual with specialized training in either forest entomology or forest pathology to provide leadership and direction to their program. Many additional states soon joined the program. In 1978, Congress passed the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act.

This legislation streamlined the process of Federal cooperative funding of state forestry programs and combined the provisions of the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924, the Forest Pest Control Act of 1947 and several other laws into a single piece of legislation to provide financial and technical assistance to states and private landowners on a variety of forestry issues. Some of these included forest management, stewardship, fire protection, insect and disease management, reforestation, timber stand improvement and urban forestry. The Act also provided for block grants to state forestry agencies.
Another key aspect of interagency partnerships that have evolved as a result of the Forest Pest Control Act is that via memoranda of understanding and cooperative agreements, USDA Forest Service entomologists and plant pathologists provide technical assistance to forest managers on lands administered by the U.S. Department of Interior and other Federal Agencies. National Parks, lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, military reservations and other federal forest lands are included in the aerial detection surveys and their forest managers have the option of participating in the surveys. Forest insects and diseases do not recognize land ownership boundaries. This fact has necessitated the development of one of the most effective long-term interagency partnerships in natural resource management.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

William M. Ciesla joined the US Forest Service’s Division of Forest Insect Research, Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, in Asheville, NC in 1960. Shortly thereafter he was caught up in the transfer of the applied functions of forest insect and disease management to the Regions and joined the staff of the R-8, Asheville Forest Pest Control Field Office in early 1961.

He held subsequent assignments as an entomologist and program manager in R-8 and R-1 and then became Director of the Forest Pest Management Methods Application Group, a WO detached unit initially headquartered in Davis, CA and later in Fort Collins, CO.

In 1988 he became Director of Forest Pest Management in R-6 and from 1990-95 served as Forest Protection Officer for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, Italy.

He retired from the Forest Service in 1994 and has since worked as a forest health consultant.

**NEAL RAHM ARCHIVES DONATED BY SON**

The Museum is most fortunate to be the recipient of the archives of Neal M. Rahm (1909-1994), who began working in his early teens as a water carrier for fire crews on the San Bernadino National Forest and retired in 1971 as Regional Forester for the Northern Region.

This invaluable collection of professional papers, letters, publications, agency documents, and photos is a gift from Neal’s son, Gary, a 35-year U.S. Forest Service employee himself and a Museum member. The collection includes a transcript of Neal’s original signed personal work history and an expanded transcript annotated by his son. Gary adds some colorful stories about his Dad and the Forest Service he remembers hearing about or experiencing as a child. While at the same time we learn how Neal was ahead of his time in his thinking and actions on many issues, including the use of prescribed fire, livestock grazing management, public involvement, and land use planning.
Until he left the California Region, he served as a Fire Boss on many large fires in California, the only R-5 Forest Supervisor to do so.

Neal led the development of multiple use plans on his district during 1938-1941, in cooperation with fellow ranger Everett Jensen.

Neal and Everett exchanged 35 letters from 1950 until 1978 about the merits of various multiple use strategies, which are included in the collection. In 1949-1950, as Forest Supervisor on the Inyo National Forest, Neal prepared the “Integrated Use Plan” for the Inyo N.F, likely the first forest plan prepared in the nation, a copy of which is included in the archive.

His expertise and passion for planning throughout his career led to Neal’s selection in 1960 as Special Assistant to the Chief to develop policies and implement the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960. The collection includes a 44-page transcript of a discussion between Edward C. Crafts, Assistant Chief, Program Planning and Legislation; Reynolds G. Florance, Division Director, Legislative Reporting and Liaison for the purpose of briefing Neal on the legislative history of the Act.

Perhaps his most unique job was near the end of World War II when Neal was assigned to the Fourth Air Force as liaison officer for six western states on the “Fire Fly Project”, aimed at combatting Japanese efforts to launch balloons and fire bomb U.S. forests. Neal prepared the final report for the project in 1946, which is also included in the collection.

The Museum is very grateful to Gary Rahm for his Dad’s collection and the incredible organization he provided to the documents and photos. Board member Phil Aune was instrumental in securing the collection. The Museum looks forward to using the Neal Rahm archives to help us meet our mission.
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