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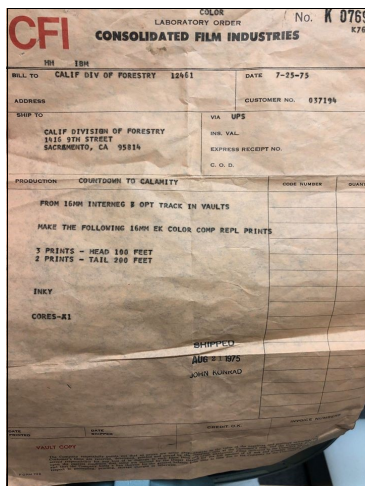
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Newsletter

C A L F I R E M U S E U M

Old Films come home to CDF/Cal Fire



Now owned by Technicolor Labs. (read as: IT STILL EXISTED!) A helpful rep from their archive explained that much of their old vault of film elements still remained until they could locate and return them to their "rightful owners". "Division of Forestry" items on their shelves. the answer was a resounding YES. After several months of communication



with the lab, the lawyers and Sac HQ staff, I am PROUD to say that yesterday the CDF Museum took possession of 59 containers of both 16mm and 35mm film and film elements from CDF produced films from the 60s and early 70s! Hurrah!! (7 big boxes of film boxes, film cans and a couple magnetic tape sound reels) Including...yes, Countdown to Calamity. Thanks to Cal Fire staff, Chief McLean and all who continue to support the museum's efforts! Libby Groom spearheaded this effort to retrieve the old CDF films Libby Thank You Very Much

EVOLUTION OF CALIFORNIA'S WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM

By
C. Raymond Clar

Continued from the November 2019 issue

Their intent was to use this information to prepare a budget request and to conduct a wide campaign of public education. The plan was prepared within a month's time and taken before the Board for practical modifications. Board member Wendell Robie, a lumberman of Auburn, was the champion of the eventual supplemental budget bill which appeared at the legislative session of January 1939. The very conservative Frank F. Merriam was Governor. And the General Fund deficit was steadily becoming larger in the continuing Depression. In the regular biennial budget proposed for 1939-41 a total of \$1,430,000 was requested for fire protection during the two year period. The Supplemental Budget Bill called for an additional \$2,003,245. (Within this total was a specified \$291,495 for allotment to the five independent county fire departments).

The special measure was killed by the Senate after suffering a severe money reduction in the Assembly. Yet one of the goals of the Board had probably been accomplished. The shock of such a demand must have had some of the desired educational effect. And the next Legislature was required to face up to the same insistent demand.

Fire Plan of 1940

In the fall of 1938 California voters switched from their generations of Republican allegiance and elected Democrat Culbert L. Olsen as Governor. The Great Depression had not departed but it was waning. Its burden of debt was still mounting. A complete new Board of Forestry and new Director of Natural Resources were appointed. A new command also brought a general shaking up of administrative processes and the repetition of a demand for a thorough plan and firm policy for meeting the wildland fire control problem. The new board went a step further and named a four man committee of staff and field employees to prepare the plan.* Deputy Director Warner L. Marsh and the young and impulsive Board Chairman, Carl Sugar, instigated and pushed the development of the plan as well as its exposure to the public. The committee prepared maps showing fire behavior patterns, areas covered by lookout observation, and travel time estimates from existing and proposed suppression crew bases. The very independent rangers were called into conferences by regions. Six regions were designated by the committee because of their individual topographic and climatic consistency. The committee later recommended the creation of Division administrative districts of identical description to supplant the loose confederation of county ranger units. But they received no support from the State Forester in this respect.

**Named chairman was Forest Technician C.R. Clar who had been continuously engaged in this project from its practical inception with the advent of the Sanford Plan in 1931. Other members were E.T. Barron, the Assistant Fire Chief, Rangers C.L. Metcalf and Jesse Graves. E.S. Miller replaced Graves in 1941.*

During 1939, the fine details of an “adequate” fire protection system were hammered out across the conference tables and into the nights in numerous hotel rooms by men who for decades had devoted most of their waking hours to the subject.

The chairmen held doggedly to two simple concepts. First, the idea seemed clearly reasonable that a consistent designation of area need should be indicated by types and number of units in the planned protection system, as modified by climate, geography, and the local fire problem. But it was difficult for some participants to attack this practical problem with an utter disregard for the sources of funds that would turn the plan into reality.

The second concept required a strict segregation of State responsibility from that of any other entity, government or private, and the use of State money to meet that responsibility. This proposition generally was met with silence, probably because of a lack of comprehension. Few remembered that the original pure concept of the Stanford Plan had quickly foundered on that same administrative –economic shoal.

The complement to this theory proposed that the county could, entirely of its free will, augment the State effort for any specified fire protection purpose. Firetrucks and drivers would be maintained by the State during the winter months, and any number of patrolmen or rural fire stations would be maintained during any time period, all as specified and paid for by the county.

It would seem that such a simple, business-like concept would be generally approved and adopted with little question. But what must be recognized is that such a specification of organizational details, including the establishment of administrative districts, meant placing a check-rein on the independent and self-sufficient field rangers who had heretofore stood midway between the distant boss in Sacramento and the county supervisors. The Board of Forestry enthusiastically accepted the proposed plan and budgeting concept, and the Clar Plan. Representatives of Los Angeles County registered disapproval because, as they said quite accurately, that area had been disregarded. The Board then instructed the planning committee to consider the needs of the five non-Division county agencies, using the same standards of protection throughout.

This was done, but not with enthusiasm. The committee reported confidentially to the State Forester that State standards could not satisfy the desires or meet actual expenditure standards of the non-Division units. Most of those independent county units were spending considerably more per acre for fire protection than was the State elsewhere on land that might be judged of similar importance. But who was to say what portion of that expenditure was, in good faith, actually spent to protect the wildland values and what portion to protect the industrial and suburban investments.

At this time the relative portions of State and private timber-watershed lands protected by agencies was as follows: five non-Division agencies, 6.1 percent; U.S. Forest Service, 29.2 percent; Division of Forestry, 64.7 percent.

In brief then, this planning committee, secure in the support of the Director of Natural Resources and the Board of Forestry, was willing and anxious to build an administrative and policy structure which would bind together the loose elements within the Division, and set forth the explicit responsibility of State Government within the Division of Forestry area. But in respect to non-Division agencies it felt it had neither the time nor prestige to recommend a policy format in a game the rules of which could be as elusive as the whims of the next legislature.

The committee recommended , and the administration endorsed the continuation of the current zone-unit (Sanford Plan) method of allotting funds to the non-Division agencies, plus such federal aid as their individual expenditures might earn.

The General Fund deficit was approaching a low of 68 million dollars, Republicans within and outside the Legislature were keeping the some times inept Governor Olson off balance. A shadow of impending war was darkening the land. Military camps and war industries were causing concentrations of populations, especially in trailer camps. A military aircraft warning system was developed and the Division of Forestry was quietly enveloped in serious plans to effectuate this service if it became necessary. Plans also proposed that the Division be prepared to assume statewide fire dispatching and standby fire protection on the periphery of cities and vital industries. In September of 1941 a State Council of Defense was created by stature. The Division's Fire Plan of 1940 stood forth by this time as a solid and framework, a fire protection bulwark against the very real thread contained in enemy attack by sea or from internal sabotage.

In the fall of 1939, deputy Director Marsh intended that every legislator and leading citizen should, by the time the 1941 legislature session assembled, know what was meant by the State Fire Plan.

To this end he persuaded the State Chamber of Commerce to sponsor dinner meetings , if not the Plan. Throughout the fall and spring, from Yreka to San Diego these expositions of maps, statistics and declared needs were taken before the public in two dozen meetings. Occasionally the routine of the medicine show warmed into a debate of issues; and this was all to the good. The program was essentially educational.

During this period, the Division organization was annually responding to about 5,000 fires, of which roughly half occurred within the timber-watershed area. It boasted some 230 regular personnel and around 800 seasonal employees, with 330 pieces of motorized equipment of which half were water-carrying firetrucks. Seven bulldozers and a smattering of high frequency radios new to talk about. The Civilian Conservation Corps had played a great role in fire-fighting as well as construction. But in 1940 , on orders from Washington, that source of labor was being withdrawn as a first attack element.

A special legislative session was called in 1940 principally because of great winter flood damage throughout the State. The Division of Forestry asked for \$883,608 to start augmenting the Fire Plan and to offset the loss of CCC first attack assistance. The Legislature granted \$300,000. From this sum , 38 new chassis and equipment for firetruck fabrication was acquired.

The Fire Plan of 1940 required something more than three million dollars to level off the "adequate" fire protection system for State and private timber and watershed land. It was intended that this total be reached over three biennial periods. So into the legislative hopper of January 1940 went another substantial supplemental money request for the Division of Forestry. The sum printed on the bill said \$1,171,505. By this time the regular two-year Division budget had risen to a half million dollars more than this requested supplement.

This Legislature was harassed by two winters of damaging floods, increasing pressures of potential warfare, and the heaviest debt on record. It quickly quashed the supplemental request. However, there was appropriated a quarter million dollar fire emergency contingent fund to be made available as deemed necessary by the Director of Finance.

Also, four supplementary appropriations were made. More than \$48,000 was granted to repair flood

Continued from Page 4

damaged Division roads and trails, and a \$50,000 was for cooperative blister rust control. Two items pertained to fire ; \$105,404 was specifically appropriated to meet the concentrated problems around “vital national defense activities”, and \$100,000 was to reduce the shock of the repeal of the Compulsory Patrol Act of 1923.

Fire Disaster Plan and Pearl Harbor

The field forces of the California Division of Forestry were beginning to recuperate by the end of November after attacking 7,547 fires of all descriptions during the fire season of 1941. Practically all of the thousand or so seasonal firefighters, crew cooks, and lookout observers were of the payroll.

As part of the comprehensive civil defense preparations against sabotage, offshore bombing or invasion, a statewide California Fire Disaster Plan was created. Fifteen mutual aid districts were delineated and coordinating officers were elected by and from among all agency fire chiefs. State Rangers occupied many of these honorary positions. The Division’s statewide network of radio and more than 2,000 miles of independent telephone line, in company with a tested dispatch procedure, caused this system to be selected as the supreme emergency fire dispatch system.

The Board of Fire Underwriters of the Pacific was certainly an influential force in bring about such an entirely sensible plan for cooperation among agents not commonly known for relinquishing local privileges and prerogatives. Yet the military people were quite insistent that civilian agencies should make themselves competent to handle potential civilian problems. These were very serious times.

The point of the moment in respect to the State forestry organization is that it was absorbed into the great war defense movement, where residential and industrial protection, while not emphasized as such, was certainly not subordinate to the general values of watershed and timber.

On the evening of December 7, 1941, orders were issued from the State Forester for the occupation of some 30 specified lookout stations to warn against enemy aircraft. Firetrucks were manned and made ready for standing by the periphery bomb targets. A 24 hour team of dispatchers was placed in the central dispatch office in Sacramento.*

Director Kenneth Fulton of Natural Resources was equal to the occasion. He instructed staff personnel to forget dollars and prepare an asking budget for all that was needed to meet the tremendous new burden which would certainly be thrust upon the State organization. When the Legislature met on December 19, the sum of \$6,871,017 was requested for the remaining 18 months of the biennium. This sum did not include 120 aircraft warning observers to be maintained from special military funds.

The Director of Finance was much opposed to such a fantastic appropriation for this one agency. This sum was considerably more than the total war-caused needs requested by 22 other State departments. But Fulton would not yield even though he could not swing the Governor to his side.

•This writer had assumed the Title of Chief Deputy State Forester seven months earlier, and with it the prime responsibility for Division of Forestry operations. By December the regular fire suppression funds had been expended and the actions described above soon created a \$38,000 deficit. Before an inquiring Senate Committee his embarrassment was relieved when Attorney General Earl Warren commended the action taken under the circumstances.

The Legislature did appropriate and the Governor on January 28, 1942 signed the bill granting \$4,022,700 for the remainder of the calendar year . The appropriation was broken into five items of which one referred to \$128,057 for non-Division agencies. Also there was money to be allotted to augment dispatch service and for the maintenance of a motor pool of men and firetrucks under Division supervision near metropolitan centers.

It is interesting to note that during 1942 the State Forester executed five separate cooperative agreements for wildland fire protection with Lo Angeles County. Through these agreements the sum of \$114,785 was transferred to the use of the County Forester and Firewarden.

The wartime activities of the forestry agencies is an exciting story in itself. There were, for example, the Japanese incendiary balloon incidents, and the subsequent military "firefly" camps established to work under the direction of forest officers because of the anticipated increase in fires. There was a very substantial use of troops from training camps and prison crews taken directly from penal institutions. Nearly 600,000 acres of land under Division protection burned during 1942, but this could be charged primarily to prolonged adverse fire weather, especially in southern California.

A Policy Structure both Firm and Flexible

The physical expansion and accomplishments of the Division of Forestry during three years of the war adventure was remarkable in its dimensions. However, the aspect bearing most importantly upon the broad State policy is to be observed in the fact that State money had been made available to such an extent that all of the essential features of a full blown idea plan could be implemented in fact. There was never a complete and total manning of all the ramparts, but the reason lay in the difficulty of acquiring personnel in competition with the military and the war industries. Federal money had been made available through usual channels, and by a of deficiency appropriations made by Congress.

County cooperation was maintained without any considerable change due to the War.

Some State fiscal experts declared flatly that the Division was enjoying only a very limited taste of luxury and had better not get use to it. Forestry officials declared that the Plan of 1940 had been demonstrated to the people for its full worth and was to stay. And that is essentially what has occurred.

In 1943 Earl Warren took office as Governor. He had a great many things to do before he could concentrate upon the Department of Natural Resources. A staff member of the Department of Finance who had been a general overseer in this field was appointed as Director of Natural Resources. William H. Moore, in somewhat of a caretaker's position for a year's time, was well acquainted with the concept of the Clar Plan. Now with the recent planning committee chairman already employed as his assistant, Director Moore did not dally with any niceties of protocol or politics.

Six administrative districts were created and placed under the supervision of a Deputy State Forester during May of 1943. The Chief Deputy State Forester was sent around the State to inform the boards of supervisors that henceforth the State Division of Forestry would give such fire protection to the delineated State and privately owned timber and watershed lands as a specified number of fire crews and other facilities would provide. And also, whenever necessary the State would pay such emergen-

cy fire fighting costs as might be deemed proper by the State. And further, the State would augment its forces to any extent and manner desired by the county reimbursed for the actual cost of service provided, plus a five percent administration fee.

As can well be imagined, such a brusque and business-like presentation caused a certain amount of doubt and antagonism, especially when voiced by an unknown official from Sacramento instead of their well known local resident, the State Ranger.

Early in 1944, General Warren T. Hannum (U.S.A. ret.) was appointed Director, and with him DeWitt Nelson as his deputy. The vigorous "Swede" Nelson became State Forester a year later. The much respected and active citizen of Los Angeles, William S. Rosecrans, became chairman of the Board of Forestry and remained so for 14 years. The Division of Forestry now moved rapidly into new forestry programs and solidified others that had been attempted under the Olson administration. Vital laws were enacted. For example, the policy of having the Board "classify" the lands whereon the State would assume primary financial responsibility for forest fire protection was set forth in a statute of 1945.

One of the most valuable actions taken to eliminate a cause of almost continuous bickering is found in another act of 1945 wherein it was declared that all monies flowing to the State of California by virtue of the Clarke-McNary Act shall be paid into the General Fund of the State. Very probably Legislative Auditor Vandegrift could have related the history of this particular legislation if he had been so inclined.

The problem of illegal or unregulated burning of brush land was attacked and the emotional pressure quite generally reduced by some compromise, some State assistance, much mutual goodwill, and by the good fortune of new developments in heavy machinery and useful chemicals which could be used with fire applied under control.

In 1945 four camps of wards in the custody of the newly created California Youth Authority were established. In these camps, custodial officials handled camp management and housekeeping while State forest officers organized and directed work crews. The following year, camps of selected adult prisoners were established. This joint Conservation Camp Program has been highly successful, both in its rehabilitative aspects and in the conservation of natural resources. There are currently some 2700 inmates and wards in these camps.

By the fire season of 1946, State Forester Nelson and his staff were able to come up with an amiable agreement with the independent county fire departments upon the use of "fire plan units" as the measure of dollars to be allotted by the State for the protection of "State responsibility" area in the respective county. The Actual allotment is represented by an item the full Division budget presented to the Legislature. Actual appropriations to Division and "contact" agencies are kept in direct proportion.

Flexibility and independence of the county fire departments is permitted in respect to actual field installations as long as these operating fire protection units equal or exceed the planned level of protection within the timber-watershed lands. Such a requirement is largely theoretical in view of the local fire protection systems developed by the counties. However, there is always a strong prevailing local influence in a populated area would be toward structural and industrial fire protection to the possible detriment of the wildland values.

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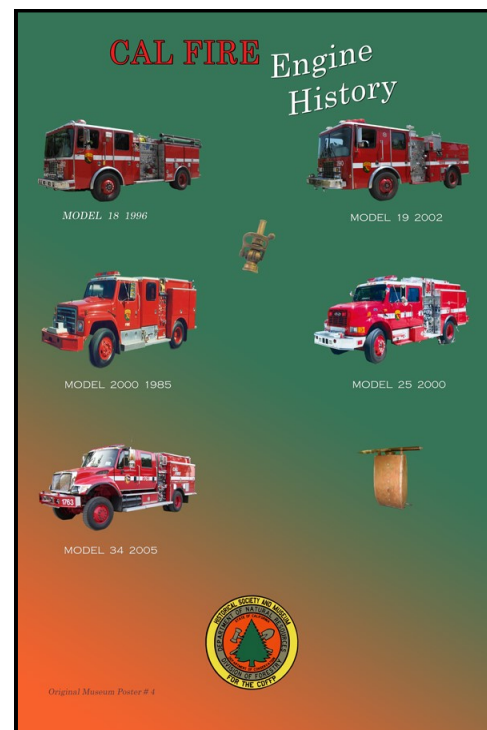
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Continued from page 7

It was not so easy to establish a firm policy for the budgeting of State funds to the U.S. Forest Service for the protection of about 5.23 million acres of State and private land within and adjacent to the Nation Forests. It had always been difficult to convince fiscal officers and some legislators that the Federal Government was not happen to assume most of the cost of protecting small parcel of private land just because it might be a practical necessity for the Forest Service to do so while protecting federal land.

In addition to fiscal officers and the advisors to the Legislature combining to disparage the State Forester's arguments on behalf of higher allotments to the Forest Service there have been other stumbling blocks. The inclination to regard Sam as a Rich Uncle who can well afford to handle the job is unfair and illogical but difficult to overcome. And, for a number of years the fiercely independent attitude of many oldtimers in the Forest Service did not help. More specifically, its was not until 1957 that the "fire plan unit" system for developing this budget area was put into effect. The actual field installation of planned crews and patrolmen by the Forest Service, at State request and costs, has been working quite satisfactorily. However, up to the present time (1969) the Legislature has appropriated only about 70 percent of the need as declared by the State Forester and Board of Forestry.

For the remainder of the timber-watershed lands, approximately 85 percent of the planned need is acknowledged by State appropriation. During favorable fire seasons, savings may be made by delayed hiring of seasonal crews. During times of genuine fire emergency State field officers are permitted, upon their owned responsibility, to make expenditures form the fire emergency fund.

For more than a quarter century now the complementary concepts of the Fire Plan of 1940 have prevailed against al personality or political pressure winds. On one hand, the relative job load from place to place is determined by specialists in the business, and secondly, the State elects to redeem the State's designated responsibility without any sleight of hand in money matching or grants in aid. Some 26 counties reimburse the State to the extent of more than six million dollars annually for the rural fire protection services they have requested. Such a vast program has its myriad problems, but few occur in the vital structure of basic policy.

A rigid policy of fiscal honesty and administrative consistency prevails. I has been found to be the most profitable policy in accomplishing the large and difficult project of wildland fire protection in California.

This article taken from the pamphlet " Evolution of California's Wildland Fire Protection System" by: C. Raymond Clar

This concludes the Article

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The picture was take of the Humboldt Unit in April, 1966
pictured are, front row: Tom Appel, Jim Olsen John Rhia, Bobbie Groves,
William A. Jamieson,(Rgr)
Middle row: Tom Frakes, Jim Simmons
Back row: Wes Label, Gary Craig, Harry Pritchard, Harry Harp (Assoc)