

Klamath National Forest

Orleans, Calif., January 30, 1918

Klamath - Fires

Forest Supervisor,

Yreka, California

Dear Mr. Rider:

In reply to your letter of January 21.

In my estimate of the number of fires attributed directly from grazing each year since 1911, I have taken each fire and studied it closely, taking into consideration the location, character of cover and the grazing permittee's using that particular range. While we have no direct evidence that any of these permittee's set any of the fires, their attitude towards burning and the fact that burns were only in brush areas, and would benefit no one except the stock owner, is nearly conclusive evidence that the grazing permittee's set the fires, so I have taken all fires classed as "unknown" and, where in my opinion no one except the grazing man would benefit, and charged them directly to grazing.

Date	Number Fires	Acres
1911	1	100
1912	0	0
1913	3	29
1914	3	198
1915	20	800
1916	6	318
1917	<u>10</u>	<u>4,251</u>
	43	5,696

The increase in man caused fires.

The Forest Service, in the administration of the forests have no more important duty to perform than keeping the fires down to a minimum. They are succeeding to a certain extent, and the consequence is, that at the present time, there is more thick underbrush, windfalls and general humus as a forest cover than before the service was in effect. The rapid changes in economic conditions in the last few years have brought certain industries to the front, that heretofore, was not considered as seriously as at present.

Take the grazing industry for instance, - A three year old steer is worth practically twice as much as he was four years ago, consequently more people are trying to raise steers, this necessitates more range. In this district there is practically no open range, old residents will tell you that there used to be lots of open range and large numbers of stock had no trouble in getting fee, but the Forest Service has kept the fires out, and now cattle can-not live here on account of the thick brush. After convincing themselves of this fact, what more logical conclusion will they come to besides burning the area off, as

they think, to increase the forage. It is hard to make people believe something that their own observation and experience leads them to believe otherwise.

Take the new homesteader - he locates a piece of land, covered with brush of course, he grubbs out from 2 to 10 acres, naturally he figures on raising a few head of stock, what is the result? Simply that he keeps setting out fires in the vicinity of his homestead to clear out the brush so his stock can live.

The Prospector - comes in here looking for a place to prospect, he finds that the formation is good and that there is mineral here, but the country is so brushy that he is unable to prospect where he wants to, so he considers it should be burnt off.

The Hunter - "both local and people from the outside" will go out to kill a deer, after walking their legs off, and getting tangled up in some of the worst brush in the world "so they say" what is the result in lots of cases? "stick a match in it and let it burn".

There is also another source of fires, which I will call the renegade whites and indians in the district, these I am glad to say are in the minority, but they do lots of damage considering their number. They set fires for pure cussedness or in a spirit of dont care a damativeness, they have nothing at stake, and dont care whether the fire damages others or not.

In good acorn seasons the indians will sometimes try and burn off the leaves and humus under the oak trees, to facilitate the gathering of acorns.

My past experience has proven that fires caused by "Indians burning for basket material" are invariably small fires, as the location of the material needed is not productive of large fires.

#### The reduction of man caused fires.

Have a good grazing man come in from the outside (This shows a weakness on the part of the district ranger, but I cant help that) this man to spend the summer in the district, get thoroaly familiar with conditions, take up the question personnaly with each permittee. If the verdict is to burn certain areas, do so when it will burn clean and make a good job of it. Necessary control measures could be easily arranged. I think the benefit that would result would more than offset the expense and damage to scattered reproduction which would unavoidably be killed, as it is hard to find a pure brush stand which is of any extent.

The Goat Industry - would also go a long ways towards putting the district in shape to control fires, but to start this industry to any extent the government would have to make special inducements, such as free range for a certain length of time, or they would have to demonstrate in some way that the business could be made pay, as the people here have no money to invest in an experiment, and the mere telling them it was a good business and will pay, would not suffice.

Prospecting is seriously on the wane, and I dont anticipate much trouble in the future in this respect.

In the "Pure cussedness class", the only sure way is to kill them off, every time you catch one sneaking around in the brush like a coyote, take a shot at him.

I have a scheme up my sleeve which may make you laugh, but never the less I am in earnest about it, and it might work out to good advantage. There is a lady here, Mrs Watkins, who has been here over a year doing general missionary work amongst the indians. To my certain knowledge she has completely gained the confidence of practically all the indian women and children here, and can readily adapt herself to any surroundings.

My scheme is as follows - Let the service hire this woman to work amongst the indians on a general educational basis. She could go to work about May 1, and her duties would be to travel up and down the river between Orleans and Elliotts, stopping at different indian houses, talking to them in regards to their own welfare, but the principal point to impress on them would be the fire question. This woman can do more in one season towards causing the indians to adopt our theories in regards to fire than we can do in five.

No doubt she would be able to furnish the service information in that line that would be hard to get otherwise. Other points may develop in the case which may also be quite a factor in our favor. My idea is that it be kept a secret that she was in the employ of the service. I do not think it would take a very high salary to secure her services, as she is much enthused over the idea, but we must take in consideration that she would be on the move a great deal, and her expences would amount to quite a sum, but I believe the scheme is a good one and will work.

Very sincerely yours,  
F.W. Harley  
District Ranger