



Wildfire and Forests Plenary Session: Idaho Ranchers Western Governors' Association • Winter Meeting 2012

December 2, 2012

Montelucia Resort • Scottsdale, Arizona

BERT BRACKETT STATE SENATOR

Bert Brackett is a fourth generation rancher who graduated from the University of Idaho with a B.S. in Animal Science and spent two years at Oklahoma State University working on a Master's degree. Bert is currently involved in a cow/calf, stock operation at Three Creek with his sons and their families. It is a high desert range operation utilizing the private land for a base and grazing the cattle on BLM, Forest Service and State Lands. The ranch runs approximately 2000 mother cows and over winters the calves to market them as long yearlings. Bert is a former member of the 116th Army National Guard and is the past president of Idaho Cattle Association. He has served two terms in the Idaho House of Representatives and was recently reelected to his third term in the Idaho State Senate, working on the Finance Committee (Joint Finance and Appropriations), Natural Resource Committee, and the Transportation Committee. Bert is also a member of the Idaho Governor's Sage Grouse Task Force.

KEY POINTS

- The wildfire situation is out of control in the West and the current approach is not working. If given the opportunity, ranchers can be part of the solution.
- Livestock grazing is a viable tool to reduce the fuel load to reduce the size and intensity of rangeland wildfire.
- Failure to get a handle on rangeland wildfires could result in Sage Grouse being listed as endangered.
- Western governors need to take an active role going forward.

WALLY BUTLER

IDAHO FARM BUREAU

PRESIDENT-ELECT, SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT

After completion of a BS degree in Animal Science and a MS degree in Range Management at the University of Idaho, Wally Butler managed a purebred and commercial cow-calf-yearling operation in northern Idaho. Butler later leased the ranch and operated Butler Livestock Co. and still does today in southwestern Idaho. He has worked as a range management consultant for several decades and now works as a lobbyist and range consultant for the Farm Bureau. His consulting work includes monitoring nearly 500 sites on several hundred thousand acres of predominantly federal land. Butler was awarded the Society for Range Managements prestigious W R Chapline land stewardship award and will serve as the 2013 president of the SRM's parent society.

KEY POINTS

- Human caused fire starts outnumber natural fire starts. While they generally do not result in the same size of fire they are a significant factor. We need to aggressively educate the public about the result of their actions.
- Agencies need management flexibility that at times is not utilized because of the threat of litigation. The result is a resource that is not sustainable because of excessive fuel loads.
- Recovery times after wildfire are excessively long in both sagebrush steppe and forested habitats. This is true because of the build-up of flash fuels in the sagebrush habitats and the over-growth in the timbered habitats.

MARC BRINKMEYER

IDAHO FOREST GROUP/RILEY CREEK

Marc Brinkmeyer has farming roots dating from Germany in the 1400's and in Iowa since 1870. The fact that both farms are still in the Brinkmeyer family is testament to the family's core belief that the land is to be respected and nurtured as a resource that supports us all. Marc founded Riley Creek in 1981. He began his career in public accounting with Arthur Andersen in Portland, Oregon working with medium- and large- sized companies, including several in the forest products sector. In 2003, Riley Creek acquired the Idaho Operations of Louisiana Pacific Corporation and became the largest lumber producer in Idaho. The company also has 70,000 acres of timberland in Washington, Idaho and Montana; exclusive cutting rights to 300,000 acres in central Idaho; and strategic relationships with other industrial forest land owners. In 2008 the Riley Creek Mills were merged with Bennett Forest Industries to form Idaho Forest Group. The new venture is the largest lumber producer in the Intermountain West.

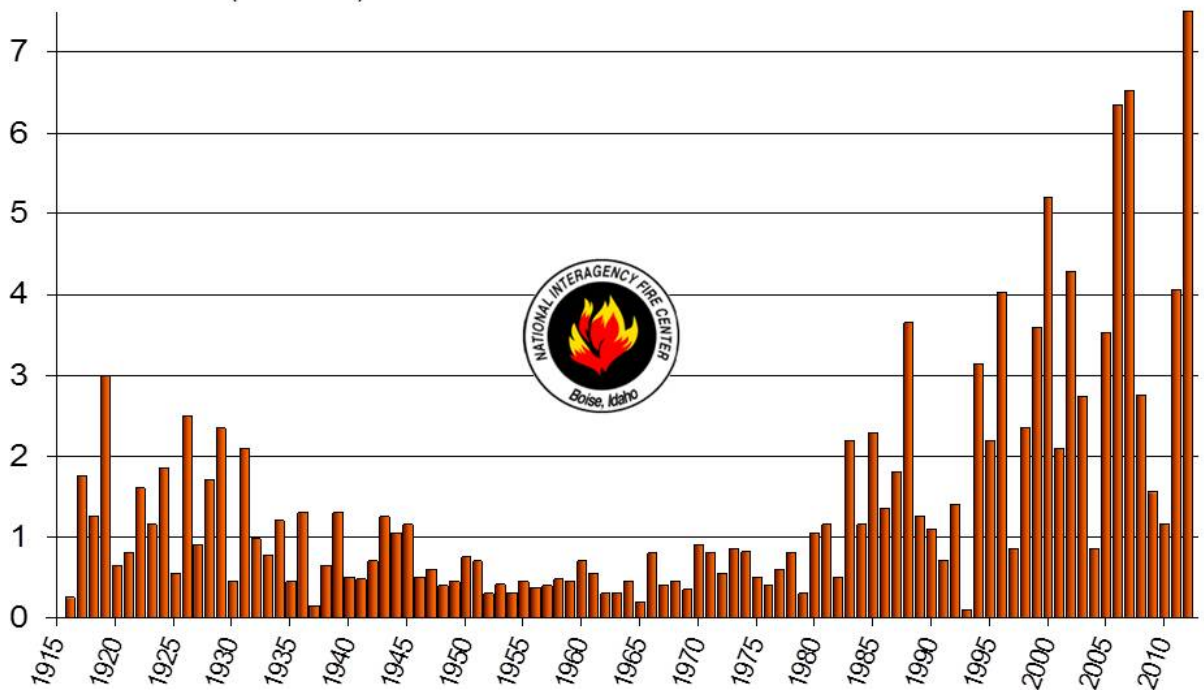
KEY POINTS

- What is most important is forest health. This is based on sound science and is not based on any special interest groups, as the forests do not belong to them. In our family, we are merely stewards of the land as it must not be possessed, it must be cared for and passed on for future generations, it knows of no political persuasion. Sound science is important and must be employed.
- The federal lands in the United States must be allowed to be managed, free from the litigation process that keeps the professionals from doing their job. All activities on the land are local and policies and procedures, in order to be executable, must be locally based. The model for success comes from our European Ancestors where they have managed their forests for generations.

- The Secretary of Agriculture has stated on many occasions that he is all about rural job and rural investment. For the Western timbered states, our families work the forests with skill and knowledge. We invest in the latest technology. Our private forests and state-owned forests are healthy and are productive. Our products are renewable and benefit our society. The Governors must provide the leadership so the necessary legislation is passed to allow the forest professionals to do their job and maintain our forests at the highest level of health for future generations.

Wildfires in 11 Western States,* 1916-2012†

Acres burned (millions)



*Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

†2012 data through October 9. Prepared by Jay O'Laughlin, University of Idaho.