

IN THE NEWS

Guilty Plea in 2008 Helicopter Crash

Levi Phillips of Oregon pleaded guilty to fraud regarding the deadly helicopter crash in 2008 that killed the pilot, a Forest Service safety inspector, and seven firefighters.

Levi will be sentenced in April 2014 and could serve 20 years in prison. He will also be testifying against Steven Metheny of Central Point, Ore.

Phillips was the director of maintenance for Carson Helicopters and reported to Metheny, formerly the company's vice president. Prosecutors say Metheny falsified records when submitting the winning bid for a \$20 million contract with the U.S. Forest Service.

U.S. House Backs Bill to Boost Logging in National Forests

The House has approved a bill that will sharply increase logging in national forests — a measure that could create jobs in rural communities and help reduce wildfires that have devastated the West. The bill would also add hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue from new timber sales.

Keith Chu, a spokesman for Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said Wyden “agrees it’s time to get the [timber] harvest up, to create more jobs in the woods and make forests healthier.”

The bill’s sponsor, Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash, said wildfires burned 9.3 million acres last year, while the Forest Service only harvested timber from about 200,000 acres. “We burned 44 times more acres than we’ve managed,” he said.

Ax Man Dies in Helicopter Crash

In September a logging helicopter crashed in Oregon, killing 54-year-old William Bart Colantuono, a member of the Ax Men reality show.

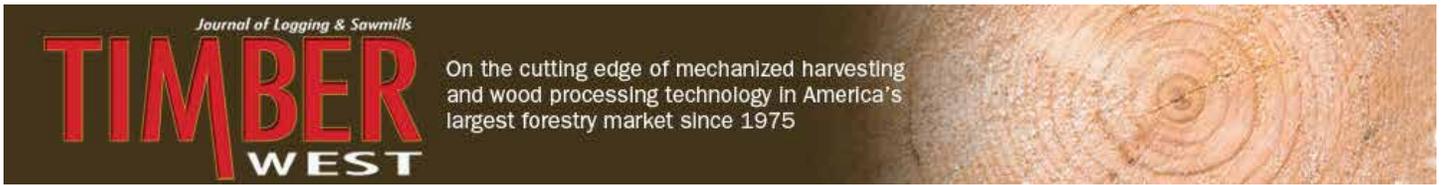
The helicopter was being used to transport logs to a log deck. Reports from witnesses say that Colantuono appeared to be releasing the logs electronically, which means he knew there was a problem before the crash.

“It had just returned after the pilot had taken a 45-minute break,” Linn County Sheriff Tim Mueller reported in a news release. “The helicopter had picked up a load when witnesses reported hearing a loud snapping sound, which was followed by logs hitting the ground.”

The helicopter was owned by Umatilla Lift Services out of Indialantic, Fla., where Colantuono resided.

Barred Owls Lose Out

In September the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) decided to go forward on the experimental removal of barred owls to benefit spotted owls.



Barred owls will be removed from parts of up to four study areas in the northern spotted owl's range using "lethal and non-lethal methods of removal."

The four areas include Cle Elum, Wash., half the combined Oregon Coast Ranges and Veneta in northern Oregon, the Union/Myrtle (Klamath) area in southern Oregon, and the Hoopa (Willow Creek) area in northwest California.

Removal is planned to begin this fall, and the FWS estimates it will take four years of barred owl removal to detect any significant results.

Iron Triangle Receives Stewardship Award

In September Malheur National Forest awarded a 10-year stewardship contract to Iron Triangle LLC, located in John Day, Ore.

According to the Forest Service, the Integrated Resource Service Contract (IRSC) will, over the next decade, treat between 180,000 and 500,000 acres and be worth approximately \$69 million.

Iron Triangle will be doing a variety of work — pre-commercial thinning, mechanical fuels reduction, road maintenance, and timber product removal. The Forest Service estimates that approximately 500 mmbf could be harvested over 10 years. The annual harvest amounts are subject to negotiation.

Ochoco Lumber Co. to Invest in John Day Mill

Ochoco Lumber owns the last remaining lumber mill in Grant County and says it intends to invest two to four million dollars in the facility.

The announcement came after the USFS awarded a 10-year stewardship in the Malheur National Forest to Iron Triangle.