

A BRIEF HISTORY  
OF  
THE SOUTHERN IDAHO TIMBER PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION

1904-1994

INTRODUCTION

I have attempted to reconstruct a brief history of the Association based on annual reports, CCC reports, payroll records, old photographs, etc. from the files. The dates of occupancy for the Association President and the Chief Fire Warden positions are as accurate as possible, based on the annual reports, which start in 1929, and are fairly complete except for a year here and there. Bill E. Williams 1991 Fire Warden  
May 1994

*30 yrs  
w/Forest. 1991  
Dawson -  
Tungabe  
Dawson NF  
Sawmill Forest*

THE PARTICIPANTS

Southern Idaho Timber Protective Association, (SITPA), originally started out in the years 1904-1907 as a cooperative effort by the Boise Lumber Company, Barber Lumber Company, A. W. Cook Timber Company and Payette Lumber and Manufacturing Company. These private companies pooled their loggers and millworkers to provide fire protection to their timberlands, during the first three years. In 1908, cooperative forest protection was set up under a "gentlemen's agreement" among the timber companies listed, the State of Idaho, and the Boise and Payette National Forests. This cooperation was so satisfactory to all parties during the years 1908-1910, that a more formal organization was established.

In 1911, the organization was called "The Southern Idaho Co-operative Fire Protective Association, and consisted of the timber companies, the State of Idaho, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, (the Boise, Payette, Idaho and Weiser National Forests). The Association provided fire protection in Adams, Boise, Elmore, Idaho and Valley counties, outside of and adjacent to the National Forest boundaries.

In 1919 the name of the Association was changed to the Southern Idaho Timber Protective Association, (SITPA). The principal subscribers being the State of Idaho, the Boise Payette Lumber Company, (successors to the Payette Lumber and Manufacturing Company), and the Barber Lumber Company, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, assisting and cooperating under the Weeks Act, and later the Clark-McNary Act. After the Idaho State Forestry Law was enacted in 1925, the number of subscribers was greatly increased by voluntary enrollment of private timberland owners.

In 1929, the first year we have an annual report for, the Association had 54 members and protected a total of 1,100,000 acres of State and private land in Ada, Adams, Boise, Elmore,

Gem, Idaho and Valley counties. The protection area stretched south to Fairfield, north to Pollock, and west to the Snake River. Sixty five years later, in 1994, the Association protects 404,851 acres, in Adams, Idaho and Valley Counties. The Association has 62 members at the present time, with Boise Cascade Corporation, (successors to the Boise Payette Lumber Company), and the State of Idaho being the two largest landowners. The Association provides wildland fire protection for several hundred additional timberland owners, based on the county tax rolls. Under contract with the State, SITPA also protects 121,185 acres of National Forest land in Valley and Adams counties.

#### EARLY FIRE DETECTION

We don't have good information on what year the Association started building fire lookouts, but we have a picture of East Mtn. Lookout taken in 1914, so we know it was quite early. The Association eventually constructed and operated 7 lookouts on Brundage Mtn., East Mtn., No Business Mtn., Packer John Mtn., Peck Mtn., Shafer Butte, and Sunset Mtn. Most of the lookouts in those days were men but we have a 1929 picture of a Mrs. William J. Moore operating the Shafer Butte Lookout. She was called "the Lady Lookout". Most of those lookouts were remote from any road, and the lookout person and all supplies had to be transported by pack train to and from the lookout.

Several of the lookouts, including Brundage Mtn., East Mtn., No Business Mtn., and Packer John Mtn. were rebuilt using log construction during the 1930's by Finnish craftsmen with assistance from the CCC program. By 1940 the Association had stopped using Peck Mtn. and Sunset Mtn. Lookouts. Today, only Brundage, East Mtn., and No Business Lookouts are still in use. All three are now accessible by primitive roads.

#### EARLY FIRE FIGHTING

From 1914 to 1937, the Association suppressed 1520 forest fires, or an average of 63 fires per year, and burned an average of 4,548 acres per year. The highest number of fires during that period of time was 110 in 1917. In 1931 the Association had 68 fires, but it was a very dry year, with 56,345 acres burned. In the SITPA pamphlet "The 1931 Forest Fires", H.C. Shellworth, Secretary-Manager for the Association, says, "in 27 years as a firefighter, I never saw anything like this ten acre blaze that in 9 days burned an entire township". A township is 36 one mile square sections of land, at 640 acres per section, for a total of 23,040 acres. We also have to remember that in 1931 most fire fighting was done by men with shovels, axes, cross cut saws and mule trains. Helicopters, smokejumpers, air tankers, and fire engines were not yet available.



As a comparison, from 1989 through 1993, SITPA suppressed an average of 59 fires, each year. Burned acreage ranged from 5,386 acres in 1989 to 14 acres in 1993, for an average of 1116 acres per year. Costs are different now also. In 1929 the Association spent \$969.20 to suppress 54 forest fires. In 1992 the Crown Point Fire, of 60 acres cost over \$100,000 to put out.

#### SECRETARY MANAGER/FIRE WARDEN POSITION

The Association's 1937 annual report gives some history on the length of service of H. C. Shellworth. He was listed as "Secretary Manager" in 1937, and apparently held that position from the period 1905 to 1948, inclusive. In the 1937 report he states, "It has been my good fortune to have been in administrative charge of the Southern Idaho District since 1905, some 34 years." In another place in the 1937 report he mentions having a background of 34 years experience in this district. We know from the annual reports that he continued to run the Association as Secretary Manager through the year 1948 for a staggering total of 44 years with the Association. No other individual appears to even approach this amount of time with the Association.

We are not sure when the Chief Fire Warden position was created, but in 1929, A. F. Coonrod was listed as "State Fire Warden". Evidently, in those days the Secretary Manager was in administrative charge and the Fire Warden did the field work. In 1978, Robert J. Kirk became both Secretary Manager for the Association, and Chief Fire Warden. That practice has continued to the present. The Secretary Manager is hired by the Association to run the day to day business of the Association. That individual is then appointed as a State Fire Warden by the State Forester.

#### THE ASSOCIATION AND THE CCC'S

During the 1930's, SITPA was involved heavily in the Civilian Conservation Corp effort. A 1933 report to Governor C. Ben Ross, from H.C. Shellworth, enumerates the camps, superintendents, and projects accomplished up to that point. From this report and other sources, we know that SITPA was involved in supervising and managing some of the eleven CCC camps that were utilized in the area during the 1930's. The CCC's built fire breaks, bridges, dams, roads, trails, did rodent control, thinning and a multitude of construction type jobs. They built ranger stations, lookouts, bunkhouses, offices, and many other types of buildings. They built the Headquarters Building, bunkhouse/garage and gas house at the original SITPA site on Lake Street in McCall. The following quote is from a 1937 report by H.C. Shellworth, concerning that construction. "One of the important projects nearing completion is the headquarters building at McCall which will be a permanent asset to the Southern Idaho Timber Protective

Association, and to the state. CCC labor has been used extensively on the construction of this headquarters building with John Hiekala and Gus Lapinoja, two log experts hired by the Association for this particular job who took their apprenticeship in Finland, the country of log houses."

The CCC's also built the Smiths Ferry facility of 8 or 9 buildings, and rebuilt Brundage Mtn., East Mtn., No Business, and Packer John Lookouts. All were built with logs utilizing the Finnish method of construction. No doubt John Hiekala (H.C. Shellworth's spelling), and Gus Lapinoja, or someone with similar skills, were involved in all of these building projects. These log buildings, especially the headquarters building, are beautifully built, and it is obvious that they were built by master craftsmen. The buildings in McCall and Smiths Ferry are listed on the National Historic Register.

#### ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS

#### YEARS SERVED

Dr. Herald Nokes	1989 to Present
Dale V. Anderson	1978 to 1988
David Little	1968 to 1977
Dale V. Anderson	1967
O.J. Buxton	1962 to 1966
John G. Walters	1958 to 1961
Arthur Wilson	1953 to 1957
Edward Woosley	1947 to 1952
Robert Coulter	1943 to 1946
Franklin Girard	1941 to 1942
C. Van Clark	1939 to 1940
W.E. Talboy	1935 to 1938
I.H. Nash	1929 to 1934
NO INFORMATION	1904 to 1928

#### ASSOCIATION CHIEF FIRE WARDENS

#### YEARS SERVED

Bill E. Williams	1991 to Present
Robert J. Kirk	1971 to 1990
Chester D. Putnam	1966 to 1970
Arthur M. Roberts	1944 to 1965
James H. Campbell	1935 to 1943
A.F. Coonrod	1929 to 1934
NO INFORMATION	1904 to 1928