



Skell RX/Telephone Fire

June 10, 2025

DECLARED WILDFIRE REVIEW

Chiloquin Ranger District
Fremont-Winema National Forest



Report Date: August 18, 2025

☒ Forest Supervisor Delegation

☐ Regional Forester Delegation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Telephone Fire was reported on Sunday, June 1, 2025, burning in the Bluejay Project area of the Chiloquin Ranger District within the Fremont-Winema National Forest. At the time, local agencies had not yet transitioned to fire season schedules, leaving few resources available on weekends. An air attack platform from northern California was the first to arrive and initiated a swift response using nearby aerial resources. Ground crews followed within two hours and contained the fire at 43 acres. Upon investigation, it was determined that the fire originated from a smoldering landing pile from the previous winter, and the Telephone Fire was declared a wildfire as a result of the Skell Prescribed Fire Pile Burn.

This review aims to compile relevant information and establish a shared understanding of how the Skell Rx evolved into a declared wildfire approximately six months after ignition. The review evaluates consistency with agency and prescribed fire policy, with the goal of fostering dialogue and recommendations to help prevent future incidents.

SETTING

Social and Political setting – National and Regional

The Fremont-Winema National Forest has an active fuels management program, utilizing mechanical treatments and prescribed fire to reduce wildfire risk across this high priority landscape. In addition to the unit's normal program of work accomplished through its permanent and seasonal workforce, the Fremont-Winema National Forest is increasing the pace and scale of treatments through strategic agreements and partnerships.

In November 2024, the region was emerging from another long fire season, marked by extended periods at National and Regional Preparedness Level 5. When pile burning operations began on the Forest in late October, local fire conditions had moderated, and the National Level had dropped to 2. By the time the Skell pile burn units were under consideration, both National and Regional Levels had fallen to 1, and local indices signaled the effective end of fire season.

Project Area Location & Description

The Skell Timber Sale is part of the Bluejay Vegetation Management Project, located in a dry forest ecosystem dominated by ponderosa pine, with mixed conifer and lodgepole pine scattered throughout. Antelope bitterbrush is the primary understory species, accompanied by manzanita, snowbrush, and typical Eastside grasses and forbs.

Timber production in the area began in the mid-1930s under Klamath Tribal management within the Klamath Reservation and has continued under the U.S. Forest Service since 1954. Recent efforts—including timber sales and vegetation treatments under the Bluejay Project—aim to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire by lowering fuel loads and restoring fire's natural role in the ecosystem.

In the fall 2024, landing piles from the Skell Timber Sale were burned under the Annual Mazama Zone Pile Burn Plan, a low-complexity programmatic burn plan.

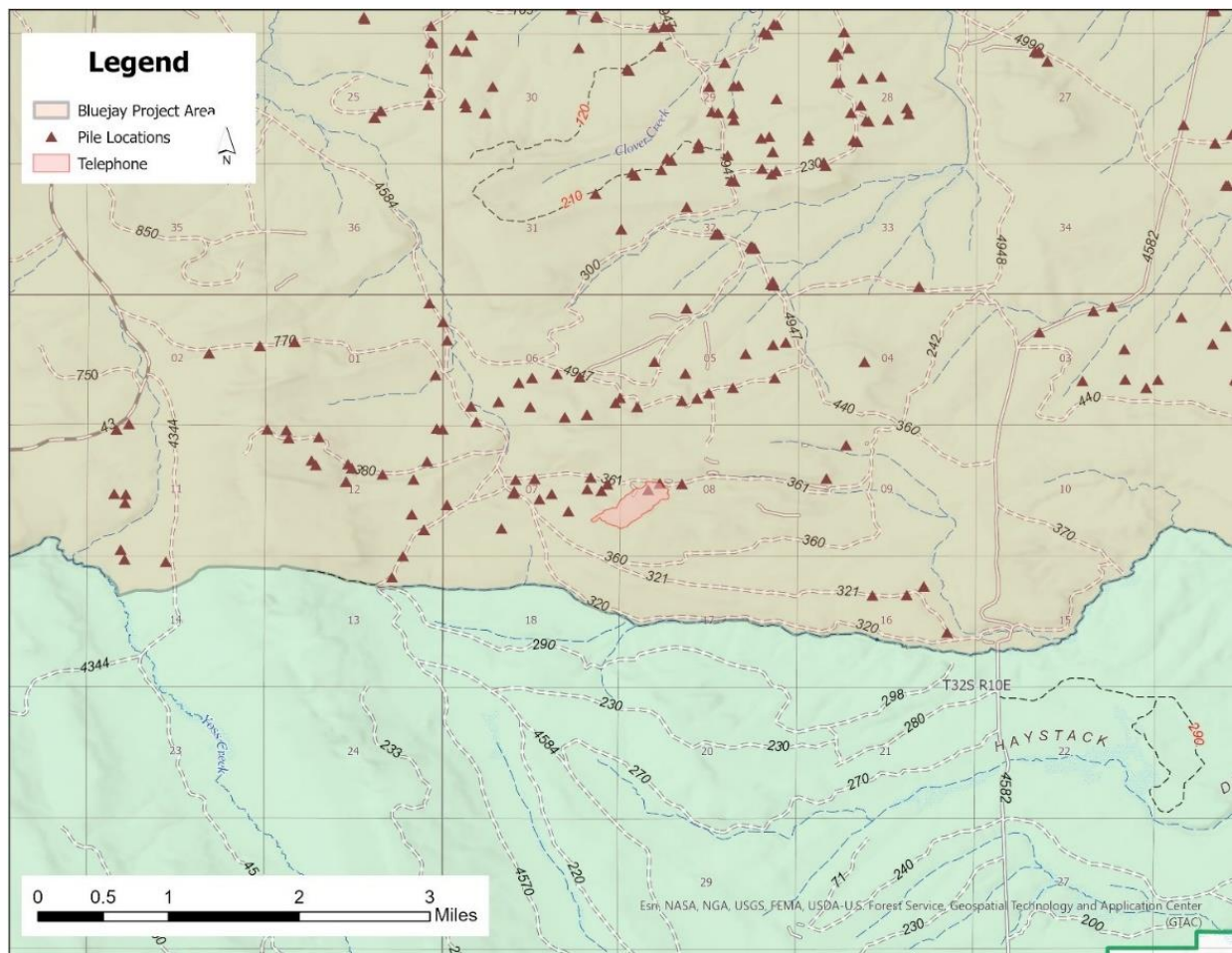


Figure 1: Map showing pile locations in the Blue Jay Project Area

Prescribed Fire Prescription

The prescription for the Annual Mazama Zone Pile Burn plan focuses on fuel moisture and wind speed. Like many pile burn plans, it seeks to find a balance between when the piles are still relatively dry and will readily consume, but when surrounding fuels are wet and not likely to allow for fire spread.

ELEMENT 7: PRESCRIPTION

Environmental Prescription				
	Fire Behavior Levels			Outside Area at Critical Holding Point (Minimal Acceptable Moisture)
	Low		High	
Temperature (F°)	N/A		N/A	
Relative Humidity (%)	N/A		N/A	
Mid-Flame Wind Speed (MPH)	0		10	
Wind Direction (Azimuth°)	0		any	
1-Hour Fuel Moisture (%)	N/A		6	6
10-Hour Fuel Moisture (%)	14		10	6
100-Hour Fuel Moisture (%)	20		10	8
1000-Hour Fuel Moisture (%)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Live Fuel Moisture (%)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Duff Fuel Moisture (%)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Soil Moisture (%)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Additional Information				
South Central Oregon is unique in its climate in that temperature and relative humidity may have rapid drop and recovery due to its high desert-like environment.				
To burn piles in the fall, fuels will need to be dry to allow for better consumption. Duff & soil moisture will be such that creeping & smoldering is minimized. When piles are lit under wet conditions (Rain/Snow), locally breezy conditions are needed to help facilitate burning condition.				
Fire Behavior Prescription				
Fuel Model(s) (FBPS)	Acceptable Fire Behavior Range			Outside Area at Critical Holding Point (Maximum Acceptable Moisture)
	Low		High	
Rate of Spread (ch./hr.)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Flame Length (ft.)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Probability of Ignition (%)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Scorch Height (ft.)	N/A		N/A	N/A
Spotting Distance (ft.)	0		N/A	200
Attach Prescription Parameter Documentation (Appendix E)				
Fire Behavior Narrative				
It is expected that the piles will have 85 -100% consumption.				
South Central Oregon is unique in its climate temperature and humidity may have rapid drop and recovery due to its high desert like environment.				
To burn piles in the fall, fuels will need to be dry to allow for better consumption. Duff & soil moisture will be such that creeping & smoldering is minimized. When piles are lit under wet conditions (Rain/Snow) locally breezy conditions are needed to help facilitate burning condition.				

Figure 2: Prescription Parameters in the Annual Mazama Zone Pile Burn Plan

Prescribed Fire Objectives and Outcomes

The burn plan states that piles are to be burned for forest health purposes and to reduce the risk of high severity fire. The objective of the prescribed fire was to consume 75-90% of slash materials in the piles, and to protect residual trees by burning under moderate conditions that are typical of late fall and winter. Gradual fire spread away from the piles is acceptable if the fire is within the boundaries of the burn unit and does not exceed prescription parameters. The piles burned until all available fuels were consumed, or weather conditions extinguished any fire, ultimately achieving a 90% consumption rate and meeting project goals.

Resource and Prescribed Fire Objectives	
Resource Objectives:	Prescribed Fire Objectives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The elimination of slash piles through prescribed burn is the final step for the timber sales, thinning, and administrative site projects. The primary purpose is for Forest Health and to reduce the risk of high severity fire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- consume 75% to 90% of slash materials in the piles.- Burning under moderated conditions typically found during late fall/winter to help protect residual trees.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gradual fire spread away from piles within the boundaries of a burn unit is acceptable. provided fire activity does not exceed prescribed levels in Element 7: Prescription. <p>If there is creep outside the pile perimeters. The available FMO/AFMO will make a recommendation to the responsible Line Officer when suppression tactics are necessary to maintain resource objectives and meet smoke management standards. The responsible Line Officer has final discretion regarding the acceptable level of creep.</p>

Figure 3: Burn Plan Objectives

Vegetation, Fuels

The Skell Rx units were composed of mixed-conifer pine and lodgepole pine dry stand with similar fuels in the adjacent vegetation. Table 1 shows the breakdown of fuel types in the unit.

TU2	Moderate Load, Humid Climate Timber Shrub	65%
TL6	Moderate Load Broadleaf Litter	15%
TL8	Long-needle Litter	10%
TL3	Moderate Load Conifer Litter	5%
TL5	High Load Conifer Litter	3%
TU5	Very High Load, Dry Climate Timber-Shrub	2%

Table 1: Fuel Models in Skell Rx

Environmental Conditions

At the time of ignition operations on the Skell Rx, environmental conditions were very favorable. Fire season had been declared over on October 25th, 2024, and many local units across the Fremont-Winema National Forest and neighboring agencies had initiated pile burns across Klamath County. Although most of the area was still experiencing moderate drought conditions, snow was beginning to cover the prescribed fire unit and surrounding lands. Approximately six inches of snow blanketed the ground when the Skell Rx piles were lit. Within a couple weeks, most of the county was designated drought free, and the project area was inaccessible due to snow. A wet winter with above average snowpack reduced all drought concerns through the winter and spring seasons (see Figures 6-8, Appendix A).

The area was still drought free when the Telephone fire was reported on June 1st, 2025. Energy Release Component (ERC) values were trending upward, slightly above the historical average but still well below any critical thresholds (see Figure 9, Appendix A). A seasonal drying trend typical for this part of Oregon was occurring, which allowed for a handful of small, human-caused wildfires throughout the month of May.

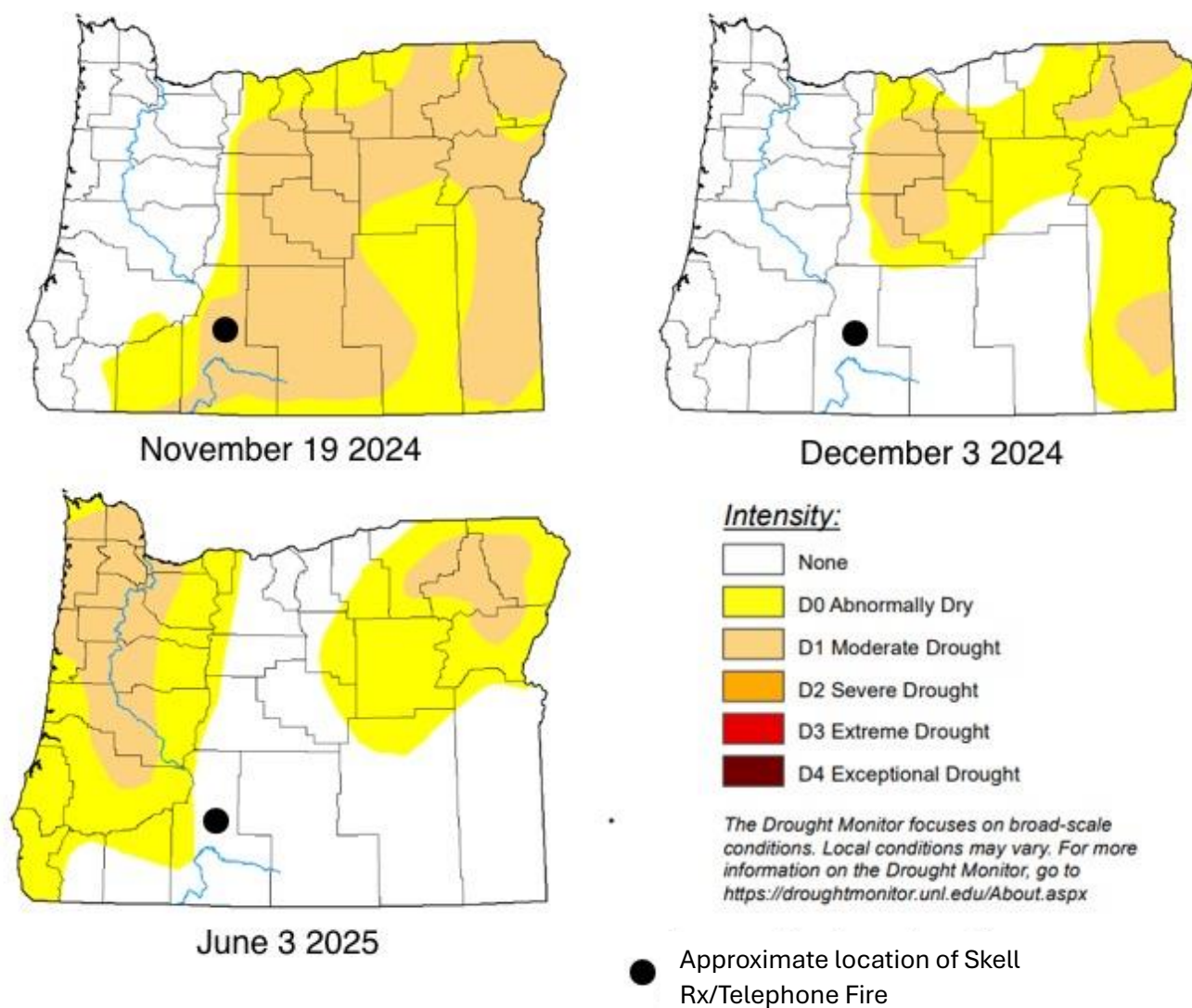


Figure 4: Drought Maps and Description

NARRATIVE

Background

The Mazama Zone began burning hand piles on October 31 and continued to burn into the month of November. Conditions were good for pile burning with consumption meeting the objectives in the burn plan with minimal creep outside of the piles. The zone had a large pile program for the year and on November 19 they began ignitions on the Skell Timber Sale units.

The Operational Plan

Pile burning had been going well as resources moved into the Skell Rx units and there was no reason to believe there would be any change in conditions with the pile consumption objectives. The Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 3 (RXB3) reported that there was six inches of snow on the ground while burning on the units over the next two days, and more precipitation was expected. No issues were encountered while burning the units and the Forest continued with its pile burning program of work for the winter, ultimately completing 22,745 acres of pile burning across Klamath and Lake Counties.

What Happened

In the spring the Mazama Zone began to look at potential prescribed fire windows again and made routine checks of the previous fall and winter pile burn units. On April 22 the unit began spring underburning and completed several units over the next week. In the first week of May a few more units were underburned before green up took spring burning out of prescription. During this time no smokes were reported in the spring patrols, but with so many piles burned across the landscape, it remains a question as to whether all the Skell Rx piles were patrolled as records were not kept of specific patrol plans.

On Sunday June 1st the Mazama Zone Duty Officer received a smoke report within the Blue Jay Project area. The Forest had not yet begun 7-day staffing, so employees had to be called back in to staff engines and respond to the fire. While the zone knew there had been large numbers of piles burned in the area of the new smoke report, it was not initially a concern that it was a pile holdover. Due to the delay in getting resources out to the new smoke report and ERCs trending above average for that time of the year, an air attack platform (ATGS) was ordered to get an initial assessment of the fire.

At approximately 1815 the ATGS got over the fire. The initial size up reported the incident to be an active ground fire at about 15-20 acres with a steady north wind and some spotting at the head of the fire. A helicopter was available to do some bucket work, and a large air tanker with a lead plane was ordered, with one application of retardant made at the head of the fire.



Figure 5: Telephone Fire June 1 at 1808 from ATGS

Forest resources arrived a few hours later and began suppressing the fire. Resources included several local engines and a dozer, and they were able to make quick progress in securing the fire. That evening dozer line was completed around the incident, and it was contained at 43 acres.

The next morning additional resources including two hotshot crews that were available on the Forest were assigned to help with mop up, and a Fire Investigator (INVF) was ordered to determine the cause and origin of the incident.

Although it was considered a possibility that the fire may have been the result of a pile holdover, there was low confidence that a final determination would be made, due to the lack of investigators normally available and the percentage of investigations that result in no clear determination.

Since the incident was considered a wildfire at first report the unit continued to treat it as such with resources focused on mop up and securing the fire. However, with the numerous piles that had been burned last fall near where they believed to be the point of origin, discussions began about how to properly handle the fire.

On June 3, the INVF completed their investigation and determined the cause of the Telephone Fire to be a landing chip pile that was burned the previous November.

At this time the discussions became more serious with the knowledge that the Telephone Fire was actually a prescribed fire, Skell Rx. Due to the mounting costs of retardant application and having over 50 personnel assigned over multiple shifts the conversation became centered on whether Skell Rx should be declared to a wildfire.

The initial discussions began with the acting FMO, the Agency Administrator, and acting Fire Staff Officers, then brought in the Forest Supervisor and Deputy Forest Supervisor before seeking input from the Regional Office. Ultimately on June 10, nine days after the initial report of the incident, the Skell Rx was declared a wildfire.



Figure 6: Example of landing pile with chipped material, similar to the one burned in Skell Rx.

CONCLUSION

The review team found two major issues that drove the situation that resulted in the Skell prescribed fire becoming the Telephone wildfire.

The first issue is the potential for heat to hold over for long periods in landing piles. Across the Pacific Northwest Region, approximately 58,000 acres of pile burning occur annually (2022–2025 average), much of it following timber harvests or mechanical fuel treatments. While pile burning is considered low-risk and essential for meeting hazardous fuels reduction and active management goals, it still carries some inherent risk—especially in large landing piles that can retain heat for months undetected. In the case of the Telephone Fire, residual heat lingered for over six months before discovery. While pile burning must continue to support agency objectives, implementing some of the recommendations from this report may help in reducing risk associated with this activity.

The second issue regards our response approach to smoke reports. There’s a distinct difference in how agencies respond to smoke believed to be from a wildfire versus smoke within a known prescribed fire unit. Although the initial attack was appropriate given the information available, it led to a commitment difficult to reverse, missing the chance to manage the incident with alternative objectives. This situation underscores the contrast between wildfire suppression success—defined by rapid initial attack—and prescribed fire success, which emphasizes maximizing treatment benefits and minimizing cost per acre.

Despite the Skell Rx being declared the Telephone Fire, no injuries or property damage occurred, and the fire produced a beneficial underburn. Most importantly, the District and Forest demonstrated a sincere commitment to learning from the incident and integrating those lessons into future operations.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons Learned by The Participants

- Pile burning operations carry inherent risks, particularly holdover heat in burn pile footprints. Large landing piles can smolder for weeks or months post-ignition, necessitating spring patrols and monitoring. In the Skell Rx unit, spring patrols were conducted, but subsurface heat can escape detection—even by UAS with thermal imaging—underscoring the need for a strategic post-burn monitoring plan.
- BD/KV Plans should include the cost of using equipment to spread burn pile remnants immediately after pile burning season.
- Burning fewer landing piles in a year may reduce the amount of potential holdover heat, though this approach defers risk rather than mitigates it.
- Fire and Fuels Management need to work with Sale Administration to ensure that all landing piles are lined by dozer.
- Fire and Fuels Management needs to work with Interdisciplinary Teams to create solutions that prevent the creation of large-scale chip piles.
- This incident underscored the cultural divide in how the agency approaches prescribed fires versus wildfires. Had responders recognized the event as a prescribed fire, the strategy may have prioritized containment using natural barriers or roads, rather than rapid suppression. Awareness of its prescribed status might also have shifted the focus toward cost-effective resource use, contrasting with the wildfire approach that defaults to aggressive initial attack and full resource deployment. While the wildfire response was not wrong, and aggressive initial attack is a core part of the agency's fire management mission, in this instance it also conflicted with prescribed fire strategies that emphasize maximizing ecological benefits and achieving long-term risk reduction objectives.
- Utilizing previous burn plans as a template for future plan development is a common practice, but there is a constant danger of copying and pasting parts that are not appropriate or valid. Ensuring every burn plan is tailored to the individual unit and complexity level of the project is critical to being able to implement the plan as written.

APPENDIX A: ANALYSES AND ASSESSMENTS

#1: Analysis of seasonal severity, weather events, and on-site conditions.

South Central Oregon experienced a wetter than average winter in following the ignition of the Skell Rx unit, with widescale precipitation events beginning in October and continuing throughout the fall and winter. Klamath County had been declared drought free as of December 3, 2024, and snow began to cover the area in late Fall persisting in many areas through early-mid April.

Drought, or lack thereof, does not appear to have played a role in the Skell Rx pile escape. If anything, the wet winter with above average snowpack allowed snow to linger longer in drifts and shaded areas, prolonging the inaccessibility of the project area.

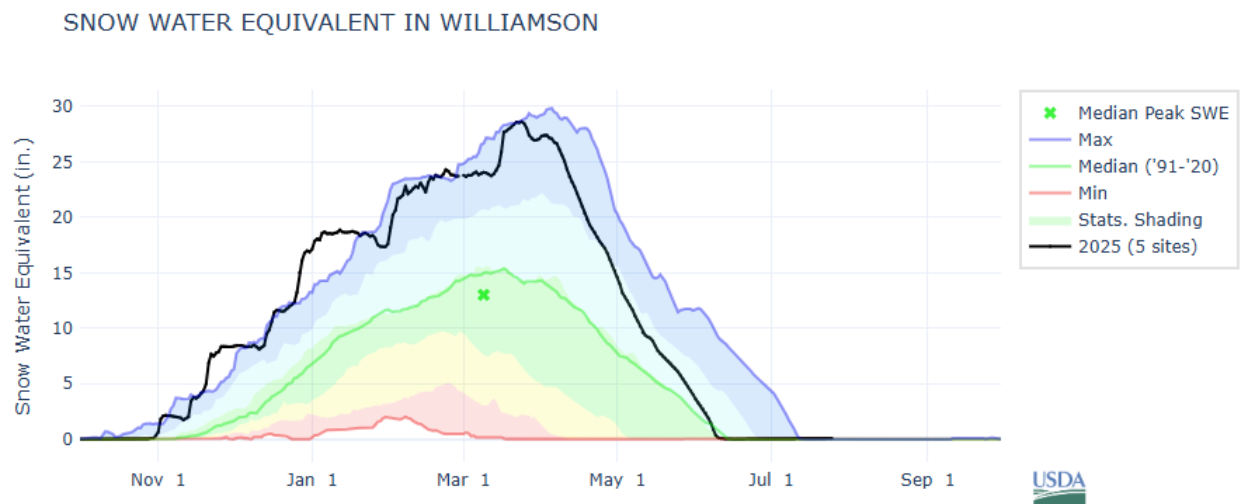


Figure 7: Williamson River Basin Snow Water Equivalent Graph Showing 2025 Water Year Versus 30 Year Average.

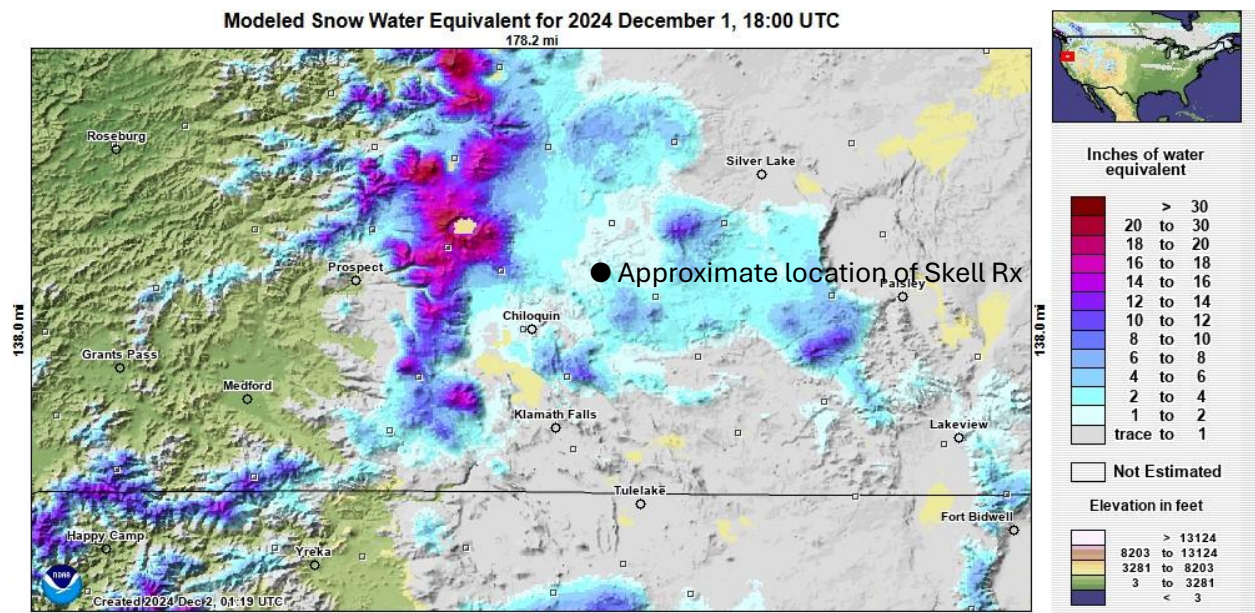


Figure 8: Modeled Snow Water Equivalent for South Central Oregon as of December 1, 2024.

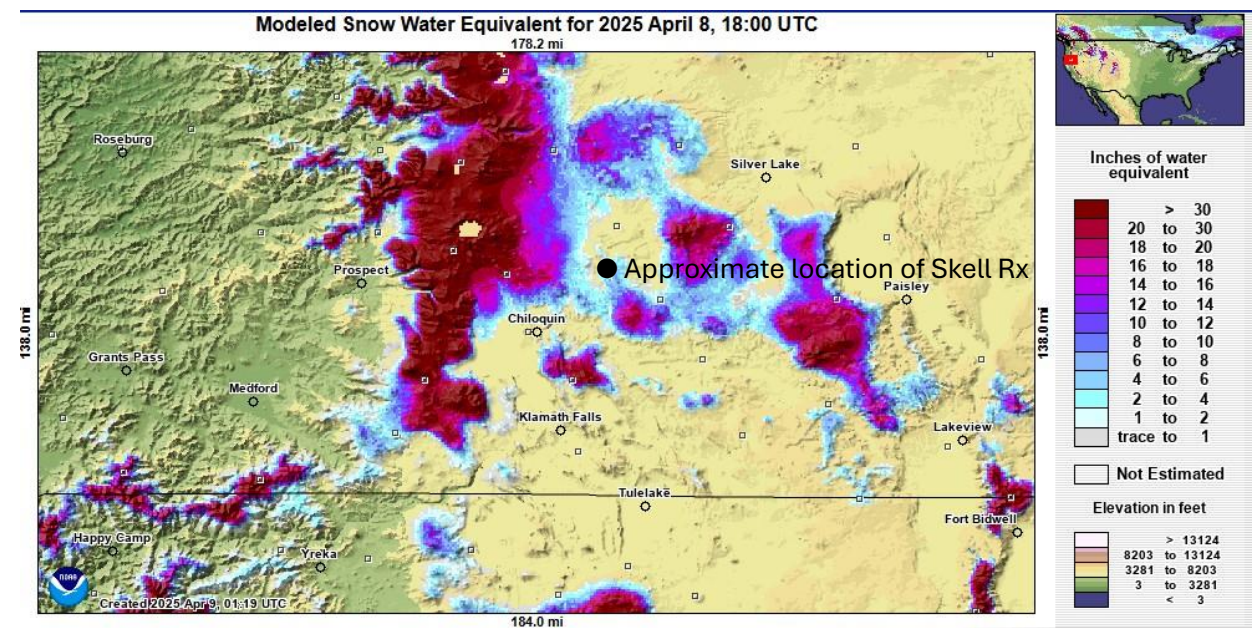


Figure 9: Modeled Snow Water Equivalent for South Central Oregon as of April 8, 2025.



Figure 10: ERC Graph from nearest weather station showing values for June 1, 2025. Current value of 35.2 (black line), which is above the seasonal average (green line) but well below the 90th percentile value of 46.6 (horizontal line that red line touches).

#2: Analysis of the prescribed fire plan for consistency with agency policy.

Table 1: Analysis of Mazama Pile Burn Plan Prescribed Fire Plan Elements for consistency with policy and whether the element may have been a contributing factor to the outcome.

PREScribed FIRE PLAN ELEMENTS	CONSISTENT WITH POLICY (NWCG and USFS)	COMMENTS	CONTRIBUTING FACTOR?
Element 1: Signature Page	Yes	Burn Plan approved 10/30/2023. Annual update and review occurred 10/08/2024.	No
Element 2A: Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization	Yes		No
Element 2B: Prescribed Fire GO/NO-GO Checklist	Yes		No
Element 3: Complexity Analysis Summary and Final Complexity	Yes		No
Element 4: Description of Prescribed Fire Area	Yes		No

Element 5: Objectives	Yes	Inconsistencies noted with Element 7.	No
Element 6: Funding	Yes		No
Element 7: Prescription	Yes	Element 5 gives an objective “to consume 75% to 90% of slash materials in the piles,” however in the Element 7 Fire Behavior Narrative it states that “it is expected that the piles will have 85 -100% consumption”.	No
Element 8: Scheduling	Yes		No
Element 9: Pre-burn Considerations and Weather	Yes		No
Element 10: Briefing	Yes		No
Element 11: Organization and Equipment	Yes		No
Element 12: Communication	Yes		No
Element 13: Public and Personnel Safety and Medical	No	Plan does not conform to the PMS 484 Element 13 template or December 2022 Forest Service burn plan template.	No
Element 14: Test Fire	Yes		No
Element 15: Ignition Plan	Yes		No
Element 16: Holding Plan	Yes	Many of the guidelines for holding look to be more appropriate for an under burn than pile burn. Recommend replacing some language in the critical weather step up plan with a patrol matrix based on condition changes or expected fire behavior.	No
Element 17: Contingency Plan	Yes	Consider developing language for this element that states if/when contingency will be required or not for pile burning, and potential MAPs for ordering additional resources or taking further actions (unit boundary, project boundary, closest control lines etc.).	No
Element 18: Wildfire Declaration	Yes	Recommend adding timelines from FS Manual 5140 for notification to Forest Supervisor (4 hours) and Regional Forester (12 hours).	No

Element 19: Smoke Management and Air Quality	Yes	Part D has an incomplete sentence.	No
Element 20: Monitoring	Yes	Element states “Consult COFMS Fire Ecologist”, assume to be a typo from another burn plan.	No
Element 21: Post Burn Activities	Yes		No
Prescribed Fire Plan Appendices: Appendix A: Maps: Vicinity, Project (Ignition Units)	Yes		No
Appendix B: Technical Review Checklist	No	Technical Reviewer Checklist is missing and JHA is inserted in this section.	No
Appendix C: Complexity Analysis	No	Complexity Analysis missing from burn plan but saved in digital project folder. Mazama Zone Medical Response Plan was inserted here.	No
Appendix D: JHA Risk Assessment	No	JHA is in Appendix B, but signature was dated 2021 and was no longer valid. Appendix included SCOFMP Emergency Field Evacuation Plan.	No
Appendix E: Medical Plan	Yes	Medical Plans are included in Appendix C.	No
Appendix F: Fire Behavior Modeling Documentation	No	Burn plan does not contain Appendix F and no fire modeling documentation is attached to the burn plan.	No
Appendix G: Smoke Management Plan and Smoke Modeling Documentation (Optional)	Yes	Not provided, optional appendix.	No

Note:

Significant appendix deviation from NWCG PMS 484-1/USFS prescribed fire burn plan templates was noted. Unit is encouraged to update any burn plans to include the appendices as listed.

#3: An analysis of prescribed fire implementation for consistency with the prescription, actions, and procedures in the prescribed fire plan.

Element 2A Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization signed on 11/21/2024 for ignitions on the previous day, 11/20/2024. Per 2022 Chiefs Review, agency administrators will document all elements required for ignition authorization.

Element 2B Signed copy of Prescribed Fire Go/No-Go Checklist not provided.

Element 9 States that a spot weather forecast will be obtained prior to ignitions and on-site weather recorded during the burn. While this requirement can be waived and a general forecast used for low complexity pile burning by the agency administrator, the plan included language that spot weather forecasts will be obtained and weather taken on site, which was not followed.

Element 10 The plan includes a line to be signed by the burn boss that confirms the briefing was completed, but no signature was either made or could be found.

Element 14 The element includes a line for the burn boss to sign regarding the results of the test fire, but no signature was either made or could be found.

Element 20 Burn Plan states that hourly weather observations will be made and a FEMO report will be completed and filed, but neither was completed. Recommend not having this requirement for a pile burn plan.

#4/5: The approving agency administrator's and burn bosses' qualifications, experience, and involvement.

All Agency Administrators and Burn Bosses involved with the development of the Annual Mazama Zone Pile Burn Plan and the implementation of Skell Rx were qualified at the appropriate level. Additionally, all involved were very familiar with the pile burning projects across the zone and the vegetation management activities that generated the piles.

APPENDIX B: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OR CONDITIONS

To better understand the factors associated with prescribed fires that result in declared wildfires, the U.S. Forest Service maintains a database of all reports associated with these events. This database (the USFS Prescribed Fire Escapes Database) uses a system of categories of contributing factors or conditions present in each report and uses these as a means of identifying commonalities and trends over time across all such events to better evaluate the prescribed fire program as a whole.

Each Declared Wildfire Review Team is asked to identify any of the following contributing factors or conditions that pertained to the event to help WO-FAM's understanding of prescribed fire risks and opportunities across the entire program. In addition, the Team is asked to identify any additional contributing factors or conditions WO-FAM might need to consider tracking in the future if this review identified any new or unique factors or conditions not previously observed.

Category	Contributing Factor or Condition	Mark "X" If Observed
Planning	Burn area boundaries not aligned with favorable locations for fire containment.	
	Interdisciplinary team coordination lacking during design and planning of the treatment	X
	Lack of proficiency using fire behavior and related modeling tools.	
	Insufficient holding plan	
	Insufficient ignition plan	
	Insufficient mop-up and patrol plan	X
	Insufficient contingency plan	
	Insufficient technical review	
	Complexity rating did not adequately reflect the conditions actually experienced.	
Operations	Burn could not be completed and secured before forecasted worsening weather arrived.	
	Test fire did not provide accurate representation of fire potential.	
	Actions taken inconsistent with those described in the burn plan.	
	Insufficient patrol after burn boss transfers control to local unit.	X
Communications	Unit boundaries or special features not communicated or identified accurately.	
	Instructions not given or well understood.	
Equipment	Malfunction or breakdown.	
	Improper use or selection of equipment.	
	Equipment not set-up and tested prior to need.	
Fire Environment	Extended fire persistence – 2 weeks or more in patrol status	X
	Actual weather experienced was outside what was forecast.	

	Severe drought conditions contributing to unusually dry fuels	
Fuels	Higher than typical fuel quantity/loadings	
	Large machine piles	X
	Hand piles	
Human Factors	External influences or distractions	
	Internal stress or fatigue.	

If applicable, list contributing factors or conditions identified by this review not already found in the table above to consider for long-term tracking:

1. Since the initial report of the Telephone fire did not recognize that it was a result of the previous year's pile burning, it prompted a standard initial attack response with firefighters going direct and minimizing the fire's footprint. They assumed this was a wildfire and they would be receiving hazard pay, full premium pay for overtime, and did not consider objectives beyond a safe and aggressive initial attack. Had resources known this to be a prescribed fire, the response may have been different given the current environmental conditions. For example, aviation resources may not have been ordered, and firefighters may have implemented an indirect strategy using existing roads or natural barriers that would have resulted in more fuels treatment benefits at a lower financial cost.

APPENDIX D: CHRONOLOGY

10/31/2024 Mazama Zone begins fall pile burning

11/19/24 Skell pile unit's ignitions begin after successful test fire. 1751 acres accomplished.

11/20/24 Skell pile burning continues with another 898 acres accomplished, and piles are put into patrol status for the winter.

5/20/2025 Mazama Piles Rx 2024 are closed out in WildCAD but not declared out. The zone typically does not declare pile burns out until the end of the following summer.

6/1/2025 Resources respond to Inc # 118. Initial response includes local engines, one dozer, one Battalion Chief, and an ATGS platform. A helicopter and one large air tanker are also later utilized on the incident. The incident is named the Telephone Fire. The fire is contained at the end shift.

6/2/2025 Two hotshot crews located on the Forest are assigned to expedite mop up and a fire investigator is ordered.

6/3/2025 Fire investigation determines cause of Telephone fire to be a pile within the Skell Rx units that were burned over seven months prior.

6/10/2025 In light of the findings of the cause and origin investigation, the Telephone Fire is declared an escaped prescribed fire.

7/6/2025 1357 Telephone Fire is called out.

APPENDIX E: DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY AND EXPECTATIONS

APPENDIX B: DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY INCLUDING EXPECTATIONS

File code: 5140

Date: July 11, 2025

Route to: Andrew Taylor, Coley Neider, Jason McGovern

Subject: Delegation of Authority – Declared Wildfire Review for Skell Pile Burn converted to the Telephone Fire

To: Andrew Taylor

This letter formalizes your appointment as Review Team Leader to complete a Declared Wildfire Review for the Skell pile prescribed burn fire initiated in November 20, 2024 that resulted in the Telephone Fire wildfire on the Chiloquin Ranger District of the Fremont Winema National Forest. To ensure an objective and insightful review, I have approved your review team roster that includes subject matter experts relevant to insuring adequate analysis of findings and recommendations.

As Team Leader, you have the authority of my office to execute and complete a thorough review as described in this document. Your Point of Contact for assistance and coordination with Region 6 is Trevor Miller, Regional Fuels Program Manager, 541-589-2174. Your Point of Contact with Fremont Winema National Forest is Coley Neider, Fire Staff Officer 541-219-2126.

For necessary travel, equipment, salary or other costs related to this review use the {wildfire name} charge code ____ (P6S22925) ____ with override code _0602____.

Your authority includes, but is not limited to:

- Controlling, organizing, managing, and directing the review
- Maintaining the confidentiality of the process
- Protecting and managing the integrity of documents, media or other artifacts collected.
- Authorizing requests for additional personnel, including technical specialists, to support the Team, and releasing them upon completion of assigned duties.
- Authorizing and coordinating the expenditure of funds.
- Coordinating all media releases about the review with Robert Montgomery
- Issuance of Safety Alerts, if warranted, in coordination with Chris Martin

Expectations for Conduct of Skell Pile Prescribed Fire Declared Wildfire Review

These expectations are intended to provide you with additional context to help guide you through the Declared Wildfire Review process for which your team has been assembled.

Policy

Per Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5140, all prescribed fires that result in a wildfire declaration must be reviewed according to the procedures found in the National Wildfire Coordinating Groups [NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation, PMS 484](#).

Controls

Given the sensitive nature of these reports, Team Leaders, Agency Administrators, Directors, and Staffs are expected to maintain close control over all drafts, final reports, and related materials. Use care and discretion when sharing these reports adhering closely to the processes described below.

In-Brief, Status Updates, and Out-Brief

You are scheduled to in-brief with my staff and I on July 14 on TEAMS. Coley Neider will be your logistical coordinator and my liaison to you throughout the process. Please contact him at 541-219-2126 to discuss your logistical support needs as soon as possible. If you have process questions or simply seeking advice or coaching related to the conduct of the Declared Wildfire Review, please contact Jason McGovern, Regional Fuels Coordinator, 541-589-2174.

I expect you will provide myself or my designee with status updates on your team's progress according to the terms we agree to during your in-briefing. I expect you to complete an initial draft within 30 days which will allow time for regional and national-level review and feedback needed to finalize the report and meet the requirement to provide a briefing to the Regional Forester within 60 days. If you need more time, or if you discover information that would warrant a different type of review or investigation, please contact me immediately to discuss further.

I request that your team conduct an out-brief with myself and identified staff when your team is ready to leave the local unit which may or may not be prior to completion of your report. Your final report will be provided to me, and my office will be responsible for scheduling briefings with the next higher authority, internal and external distribution, and permanent archive of the report.

Review Protocol

Use the Declared Wildfire Review Standards as a reference to complete the review <Link>.

The goals of a Declared Wildfire Review are to:

1. Allow those directly involved an opportunity for individual learning and performance improvement through self-reflection as well as feedback and critique from third-party peers and other experts.
2. Provide for organizational learning and system-wide performance improvement by examining established policies, procedures, practices, and behaviors, offering advice to

managers for actions to create systems that produce more reliable and less consequential results in the future.

3. Establish a factual account of the event that may be utilized in training, research, claims' proceedings, or similar uses.

To be clear, this is not a Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA). A Declared Wildfire Review shares similarities with the FLA when it comes to interview techniques, storytelling techniques, development of the narrative, and providing an opportunity for read-back and validation by those interviewed, but it also differs in many respects. While the FLA is centered around learning and understanding of the event, it does not typically bring in the thoughts or opinions of third-party experts and relies almost exclusively on what was learned by those directly involved. The Declared Wildfire Review seeks to learn and understand what happened from the perspective of those involved, but also employs the knowledge and expertise of review team members with applicable expertise to provide additional context to the story by providing a description of the setting and conditions surrounding the event, and a critique of how applicable policy standards were applied including training, planning, and implementation standards.

An understanding of the FLA process gained from attendance in [NAFRI Learning from Unintended Outcomes Workshop](#) or [LFUO: Self Study](#) is helpful for all team members, but not required. I expect that you will use a similar approach to interviews and interaction with those involved as is described in the FLA process, but that you will be clear that this is not an FLA and rather this review is in pursuit of the goals described above. The Declared Wildfire Review Standards require including a team member with expertise in conducting interviews who is trained in the FLA process, but such team members should be clearly instructed that the Declared Wildfire Review and the review document to be produced may differ from the typical FLA document.

Representing My Intentions

Employees or others you will be interviewing to learn about this event will be interested in the purpose and objectives of this review and how the information they provide might be used. They may want to know how this review might affect their employment status, and the degree to which they might face civil or criminal proceedings. I expect you will represent my intentions for how I will use the information provided to your team as follows:

In pursuit of full transparency and disclosure of the events that took place, I agree that no punitive actions will be taken by the Forest Service against any employee because of information provided to any member of your team. During the review, if it is discovered that willful negligence/illegal activity may have led to the outcome notify me immediately. I expect that employees are equally committed to the objective of this review to reduce the chances of a similar outcome in the future and will provide your team with honest and constructive accounts of their experience. Please ensure participants understand the limits of my authority and that actions taken by private citizens, or other agencies or organizations, are outside of that authority and administrative or legal proceedings could be pursued by others based on information from this review.

Format, Content and Organization

The content and organization of the final report will meet the minimum standards as described in NWCG PMS 484 under the requirements of an "Outcome Review". The telling of the story of what happened, the chronology of events, and perspectives of the individuals involved is the focal point of the report. The Declared Wildfire Review must also address the five required analyses specified in NWCG PMS 484. The methodology and format for addressing those analyses can occur in many formats and I leave that discretion up to you and your team utilizing the direction here and within other guiding documents.

In addition to the narrative and lessons from those directly involved, I am also requesting that your team reflect on this event and provide lessons learned from the team's perspective as outside observers with applicable expertise in prescribed fire. I also ask that your team be alert to and if identified, include findings of conditions that contributed to the outcome along with recommendations for actions whether they be local, regional, or national in scope, that could help mitigate those conditions and reduce the potential for similar outcomes in the future.

I want to thank you for your willingness to lead this important review. Please contact Molly Juillerat, Forest Supervisor 541-852-8353 if you need to discuss the details of this assignment or to schedule key team meetings or status reports.

Approved By:

/s/ **MOLLY
JUILLERAT** Digitally signed by
MOLLY JUILLERAT
Date: 2025.07.12
13:14:05 -07'00'
{Molly Juillerat Forest Supervisor}

Accepted By:

/s/ **ANDREW
TAYLOR** Digitally signed by ANDREW
TAYLOR
Date: 2025.07.14 10:35:50
-07'00'
{Andrew Taylor Review Team Leader}

APPENDIX G: REVIEW TEAM

Team Leader:

Andrew Taylor, Deputy Fire Staff Fuels, Fremont Winema NF

Team Members:

Chris Donaldson, Regional Fuels Coordinator, Region 6 FAM

Brett Smith, Fire Planner, Fremont Winema NF

John Brodbeck, Fuels Planner, Fremont Winema NF