Northwest Woodlands

A Publication of the Oregon Small Woodlands, Washington Farm Forestry, Idaho Forest Owners & Montana Forest Owners Associations

MANAGING FOREST CATASTROPHES

Managing in an **Economic Catastrophe**

Recovery After the 2007 Storm

Are You Prepared for a Wildfire?

From Ashes to Trees:

A Wildfire Recovery Story

The Hidden Threat in Firewood

Managing Mountain
Pine Beetles





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Blowdown timber after the 2007 storm on Franz and Anne Schneider's property in Washington state. Photo courtesy of Michael Ahr

Bottom cover photo: The day after the fire on Ron Mahoney's northern Idaho property. Photo courtesy of Ron Mahoney.

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Managing a Catastrophe

By MICKEY BELLMAN

atastrophes come in all shapes and sizes, and often at the most inconvenient of times. A limb falling across a fence or a



fierce winter storm can mean both trouble and economic loss to a family forest owner. A forest fire can destroy decades of hard work and careful management while a plugged culvert can lead to a road washout. Insects and disease may destroy a forest in a single season. And then there are the personal catastrophes—death, illness and injury, divorce, taxes. Woodland owners may be forced to harvest timber to pay the bills when the market

is in the "down" position. A little preparation may at least minimize some of these catastrophes.

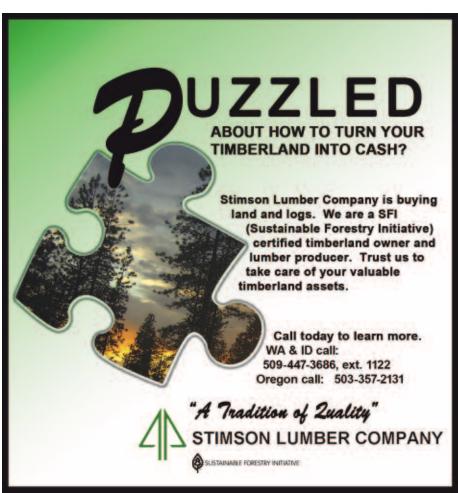
- 1. Know your property and its boundaries. If the property lines are well marked with fences, blazed lines and solid corner monuments, there is little doubt which trees have blown over or been killed by insects. Predetermined, well-marked lines will save weeks if survey lines must be reestablished by professional surveyors. While the surveyor surveys, the dead trees will continue to stain, rot and lose value. This is time when a logger could be salvaging the trees and getting them to the mill.
- 2. Have a well-planned road system in place. Surfaced roads with good culverts and ditches provide year-round access to all parts of the prop-



One plugged culvert caused this extensive road damage.

erty. Waiting for the weather to dry out and roads to be built will be avoided. Insect and disease outbreaks can be readily identified and controlled. Obviously, a forest fire requires immediate attention and a good road system provides the access for response. When tragedy does strike, the road system is already in place to speed salvage efforts.

- 3. Understand the regulations and *procedures.* Before a catastrophe even looms on the horizon, a landowner ought to understand the permit process and the Forest Practices Act. In Oregon, the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) requires an approved logging permit prior to the start of any logging operation. The permit can take two weeks or longer to obtain. Maps and detailed information are required. Harvest may be prohibited in some slide-prone areas. Streamside buffers require special planning and review. When the landowner understands these regulations and procedures, it will save valuable time, extra phone calls and numerous trips to the state forestry office. Delay is not an option when it comes to salvage logging.
 - 4. Know the markets, mills and log-



gers. Be aware of the local mills and the types of logs they buy. Pay attention to news regarding log and lumber markets: Are prices rising or falling? Who are the local loggers with good reputations? Maintain a list of mills and loggers whom you may want to contact. A ready list will save time and frustration if catastrophe does comes knocking.

- 5. Death and taxes are a 100 percent certainty. When these things occur unexpectedly, the consequences can be catastrophic. Estate planning can minimize the fiscal impacts during some of these most stressful times. Timber and land may be forced into sale to satisfy the inevitable inheritance taxes. A good and viable estate plan will make for an orderly transition to the heirs.
- 6. Winter storms can cause disastrous floods and landslides. Like volcanoes and earthquakes, there is little that can be done to predict and prepare for the events. A landowner can only wait for the aftermath and pick up the pieces. After Mount St. Helens leveled thousands of acres of timber, Weyerhaeuser and others mounted a huge salvage effort. Existing roads were quickly repaired and reopened in a mad rush to



This road was built atop old logging slash and slumped during a wet winter.

recover the deteriorating wood. Woodland owners must react quickly to recover what they can.

Catastrophes are sudden and unexpected events that can wreak economic havoc on a family forest owner. Planning and preparation can at least minimize the disastrous consequences. Landowners should take heed of an old saying: When you are up to your butt in alligators, it is hard to remember the objective

was to drain the swamp.

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