



TOM SCHULTZ, DIRECTOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **OSHA revises citation, reduces fines for Clearwater-Potlatch Timber Protective Association**

(BOISE) – The State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) today authorized the Clearwater Potlatch Timber Protective Association (CPTPA) to sign an informal settlement agreement with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and pay fines in relation to the Steep Corner fire that occurred on the CPTPA protection area in August 2012. U.S. Forest Service firefighter Anne Veseth was killed by a falling tree on the Steep Corner fire.

The final informal settlement agreement revised and removed several items from the initial OSHA draft citation and reduced fines for CPTPA from \$14,000 to \$10,500.

In February 2013 OSHA issued a draft citation to CPTPA on three items that included the 10 standard firefighting orders and 18 situations that shout “watch out,” working near hazard trees, and the use of personal protective equipment during suppression activities.

The original citation would have required fire managers to remove firefighters from any situation where the hazards outlined in the 10 standard firefighting orders and 18 situations were present. Since the hazards outlined in the 10 standard orders and 18 situations are present on nearly every fire, the original citation could have had a crippling effect on wildland firefighting organizations across the nation, causing fire managers to remove employees from most fires, limiting their ability to engage in swift and early fire suppression and resulting in larger fires that expose firefighters and the public to even more risk.

Representatives of CPTPA met with OSHA officials to provide clarity to items contained in the original citation. The negotiations resulted in the revision of the original draft citation and the reduction in fines.

“The unfortunate accident on the Steep Corner fire last summer and the subsequent OSHA citation brought to light the need to improve some of our firefighting practices,” CPTPA Chief Fire Warden Howard Weeks said. “CPTPA and OSHA share a mutual commitment to provide for firefighter safety. Thankfully, the negotiations with OSHA provided CPTPA as an employer the opportunity to provide a fact-based rebuttal through an informal settlement process, resulting in an outcome that realistically recognizes the inherent risks of fighting wildland fires and meets both our missions by improving firefighter safety.”

In a letter that accompanies the signed informal settlement agreement, CPTPA outlined the ways in which the association is revising its policies, standardizing radio practices, and improving methods to mitigate hazardous conditions in response to the items in the informal settlement agreement.

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