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News Release



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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AWARDS RURAL FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANT TO HALSEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Halsey Fire Department in Linn County, Oregon, will be able to purchase personal protective gear and equipment for firefighters engaged in wildland firefighting activities thanks to a \$2,500 Rural Fire Assistance grant. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded the grant through the National Fire Plan.

The grant should increase coordination among local, state and federal firefighting resources. “The Halsey Fire Department is our closest response force in the event of a wildfire at Snag Boat Bend, a unit of William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge located northwest of Halsey,” says Jim Houk, Acting Project Leader for the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex, headquartered in Corvallis. “We are pleased to award this grant and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the Department.”

Halsey Fire Chief Skip Smith will coordinate the purchases under an agreement with the Willamette Valley Refuge Complex office, which oversees the management of three national wildlife refuges within the Willamette Valley. Refuge Fire Management Officer Brian Gales will work with Chief Smith to administer the agreement.

The Rural Fire Assistance Program is intended to improve firefighter safety and enhance the wildland protection capabilities of rural and volunteer fire departments when they respond to wildland fires by providing training, equipment purchases, and fire prevention work on a cost-shared basis. This Department of the Interior (DOI) assistance program targets those fire departments that routinely help fight fire on or near DOI lands. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is part of DOI, requests funds to issue these grants in areas where national wildlife refuges are adjacent to lands under the jurisdiction of rural fire protection districts.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.