

Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Wildfire History 1936 - 2005

Location:
Tulelake, CA

Acreage:
39,360

Established:
October 4, 1928

Total Wildfires:
58

Percentage of Zone Total:
34

Cause Type:

Natural	5
Camp Fire	7
Smoking	2
Fire Use	15
Incendiary	10
Equipment Use	1
Railroads	0
Juveniles	1
Miscellaneous	7
Unknown	10

In October, 1928, President Calvin Coolidge established by Executive Order Tule Lake Bird Refuge. The newly created refuge, having been previously withdrawn for reclamation purposes as part of the Klamath Irrigation Project, was to be utilized as a bird refuge and for irrigation of agricultural lands.

Manipulation of the present day refuge started with the construction of Clear Lake Dam in 1910. By 1914, a sufficient irrigation system was established and withdrawn lands were leased for farming. Today, more than 16,000 acres of refuge lands are leased and farmed annually. In 1964, Congress affirmed the use of Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge as a migratory bird preserve while upholding its agricultural practices with the passage of the Kuchel Act. The Act ensured the refuges existence as a haven for migrating birds with full consideration to optimum agricultural uses.

These agricultural uses have led to a high incidence of wildfire, often the result of escaped prescribed fires or vegetation debris burns. Until recently, lessees were permitted to burn their fields. Some of these burns escaped the intended fields, explaining a large percentage of wildfire activity on the refuge. These types of wildfires have varied from only a few acres to over 3,000 acres.

The high mountain desert climate combined with cured grasses and gusty winds have also been factors in a number of Tule Lake NWR wildfires. The refuge is bordered to its west by Sheepley Ridge, a remnant of the once highly volcanically active basin. The ridge is covered in readily combustible fuels and has caught fire numerous times over the decades. Changes in uses and regulations have affected the type and frequency of wildfires too. Camping, once a staple of traveling hunters has long been prohibited on the refuge, and resultantly, the number of camp fire caused wildfires has diminished to zero.

Number	Name	Year	Acreage
T01	Hospital Rock	1938	
T02		1938	
T03	Barntop Mountain	1941	
T04		1948	0.3
T05		1949	
T06		1949	
T07		1951	
T08	Quarters 4	1953	0.5
T09		1953	1.6
T10		1953	
T11		1958	240
T12	Refuge Fire 1-59	1959	564
T13	Refuge Fire 2-59	1959	3023
T14		1960	52
T15		1960	3023
T16		1960	3
T17		1961	10
T18		1962	2
T19		1962	1
T20		1962	4
T21		1966	75
T22	Sheepley Ridge	1967	95
T23	Sheepley Ridge	1973	40
T24	Bighorn	1973	12
T25	Hard Hat	1986	10.0
T26	Hovey Point	1986	0.5
T27	Peninsula	1986	75.0
T28	Hill	1986	80.0
T29	Barn Top	1986	25.0

Number	Name	Year	Acreage
T30	Hill Road	1990	0.1
T31	Frog Pond	1990	6.0
T32	Doctor	1991	4.2
T33	Frye	1992	5.0
T34	Hovey Point	1992	5.0
T35	O'neil	1992	0.3
T36	Notagain	1995	15
T37	Elvis	1995	4
T38	Smoke	1996	0.1
T39	Spud Fire	1996	2.5
T40	Canby	1997	1
T41	HQ	1997	0.1
T42	Ark	1997	0.6
T43	Birthday	1997	0.1
T44	Demo	1998	0.7
T45	B1W	1998	45
T46	Frog	1998	200
T47	South	2001	5
T48	Mallard	2001	0.5
T49	Little Snapper	2003	0.1
T50	SMP3-354	2003	30
T51	Hospital	2003	7
T52	Marco	2004	0.1
T53	Frog	2004	34.6
T54	Moore (Truck)	2004	0.1
T55	LKR 30 - Hay	2005	0.1
T56	Tule	2005	3.3
T57	Jeep	2005	0.1
	Location and name unknown	1954	1040

Wildfire Location Type Descriptions

Calculated: The wildfire is calculated to a central point based upon reported legal location or specific place description. Examples include 48N, 2E, Section 28 or middle of Unit C-4 at waters edge.

General: The wildfire is location is based upon a general area description. Examples include Southwest Sump of Tule Lake NWR or Unit 4 of Lower Klamath NWR.

GPS: The wildfire location was determined using a geographic positioning system and supporting software, providing a specific latitude and longitude. An example is 41 degrees, 52 minutes, 54.33 seconds north by 121 degrees, 14 minutes, 12.98 seconds west, NAD 83.

Unknown: The wildfire location was recorded only in relation to the refuge it occurred on. Historical records and research did not provide any additional information. An example would be a wildfire listed as 1954, Tule Lake NWR.

