

## Does Local Firewood Burn Warmer?

An interview with Derek Craven, President of CCFFA

Recently, our chapter president Derek Craven began selling bundled firewood through the Oregon Woodland Cooperative, a group of landowners that have banded together to develop markets for a variety of forest products (see sidebar). The co-op has members all around the state, but Derek seems to be the first Clackamas County landowner to become active in their firewood sales program. We thought Derek's experience would be instructive to other CCFFA members that can't seem to get enough of that

satisfying crack wood makes as it yields to the splitter. In addition to holding down a demanding job in the heating and air conditioning service industry, Derek does arborist work when he can fit it in, providing a source of raw material for his firewood business.

### *How long have you been selling firewood?*

Since my junior year in high school. A friend and I would cut and sell wood as a summer job. In the last several



*Some very important helpers inspect the firewood quality.*

years I have stepped up the volume. Doing tree removals has provided me with most of my firewood. I also get wood from our property, Weyerhaeuser lands, and my best friend who owns an excavation company.

### *Efficiency is probably pretty important to making it with a firewood business.*

#### *Tell us about your equipment setup.*

Until two years ago it was just me, a chainsaw, and a maul. Then I purchased a wood processor that can split two or more cords an hour. I also use a small track hoe to move logs and rounds. I recently purchased a shrink wrap machine for the bundles. Last year was my first year using high school kids and nephews to help with the wood processor and in loading my dump trailer for deliveries. I



*Consistent appearance of the firewood bundles is helped by a professional-looking label.*

enjoy employing kids that need money for college.

***How did you first hear about the Oregon Woodland Cooperative (OWC) and their firewood program? What do you like about their program?***

I took an OWC class at Tree School several years ago and just recently joined. They have a lot of opportunities for woodland owners, but I'm only taking advantage of the bundled fire-

wood program. The co-op allows me to produce firewood all year instead of just the busy fall months. You can at least triple your money bundling per cord, but there is also more labor and time involved.

***How much firewood will you produce this season?***

This year I sold and am still selling bulk firewood. I'm at 89 cords as of today. I plan and have set aside more

than 20 cords to bundle over the winter. If that runs out I have the ability to cut, stack, and dry as much wood as the co-op needs.

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*That's a lot of wood! Any words of advice to the woodland owner that is interested in producing firewood for sale?*

If you plan on producing firewood for income try to automate as much of the process as you can. I regret, and my body has paid the price for, not taking as much manual labor out of the process years ago. ■



*A dump trailer takes some of the heavy labor out of delivering firewood*