

The Clarke-McNary Act of 1924 offered federal financial aid to states for the prevention and suppression of forest fires and named the U.S. Forest Service as the fiscal agent for fund distribution. The 1931 Nevada Legislature authorized the Surveyor General to negotiate agreements with the Forest Service, county and local officials, and private landholders "for the purpose of securing cooperation in the protection of the forest and watershed areas of Nevada from fire." To help achieve the objectives of the federal act, a 1937 Nevada statute provided for the organization of fire protection districts.

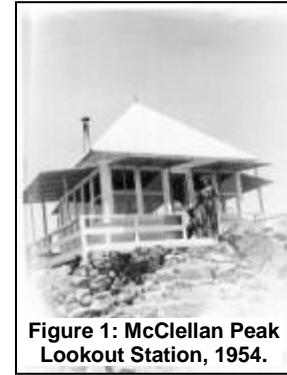


Figure 1: McClellan Peak Lookout Station, 1954.

Joint funding through the Clarke-McNary Act and the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture enabled the Surveyor General to employ an Assistant State Forester Fire Warden in 1942. In 1945, the Legislature provided a statutory basis for a State Forester Fire Warden, held ex-officio by the Surveyor General. The jurisdiction extended over state and private forest and watershed land, an area that came to include approximately 8.7 million acres.

This act also created the State Board of Fire Control consisting of the Governor, the Director of the University of Nevada Agricultural Extension, and the State Forester Fire Warden, the latter serving as the Board's secretary. The Board's principal functions were to "determine the policies of the State Forester Fire Warden in programming for the coming fire season," and to approve budgets for fire protection. Later amendments gave the Board more responsibility for aiding and advising the Forester Fire Warden. In 1955, the Board became the State Board of Forestry and Fire Control with six members representing agriculture, woolgrowers, cattlemen, the lumber and forest products industry, users of beneficial water, and one member representing the public. An amendment of 1959 replaced the

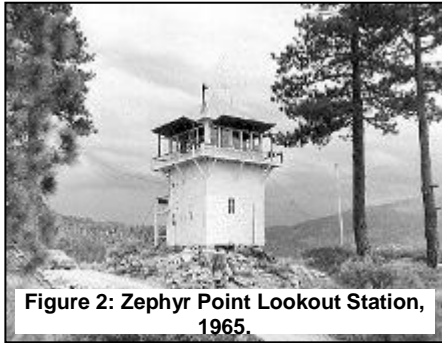


Figure 2: Zephyr Point Lookout Station, 1965.

representative of the water users with "an active participant in outdoor activities connected with fish and wildlife," and added a second representative of the public, bringing the membership to seven. Another change in the Board's composition came in 1977 when one of the members representing the public was replaced by a representative of the fire services.

A 1949 amendment to the 1945 statute allowed the Forester Fire Warden to appoint fire wardens who received police powers to enforce the provisions of the act, also permitting private owners of watershed areas "or lands having an inflammable cover in one of more counties" to form fire protection districts in order to qualify for Clarke-McNary funds. A 1953 amendment imposed criminal and civil responsibilities and penalties for the willful or negligent setting of fires in fire protection districts. The Nevada Forestry Practices Act of 1955 established regulations for logging on state and private land and set rules for fire prevention and suppression. The act gave the Forester Fire Warden responsibility for administration of the act and authorized the State Board of Forestry and Fire Control to make additional rules for the protection of trees.

For several years the position of Assistant State Forester Fire Warden was combined with that of the Extension Forester of the University of Nevada Agricultural Extension Service. The state paid half the salary out of Clarke-McNary funds and the Extension Service the other half. In 1955 it became a full-time state position. Several acts of the 1957 Legislature affected the office of State Forester Fire Warden. One gave him the authority to investigate infestations of forest pests and diseases and to take steps to control them. Another act stated that he was to decide whether territory could be included in or excluded from a fire district. If territory was to be included within a district, he was to make the necessary rules and regulations to bring the district into compliance with the Clarke-McNary Act. An amendment to an earlier act protecting trees, shrubs, and other flora on state land extended the protection to federal land, and included the Forester Fire Warden among those enforcing the act. An amendment to another statute gave this official the responsibility for establishing and maintaining state

nurseries. In 1957, in cooperation with the Forest Service and the University of Nevada and with financial assistance through the federal Soil Bank Act, a nursery was established in Reno. Finally, in 1957 the Legislature transferred the duties of the Surveyor General to the new Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Director of the Department was to appoint a qualified person as State Forester Fire Warden to head the Division of Forestry. The same act reconstituted the State Board of Forestry and Fire Control. In consultation with the Board, the Director was to set general policies for guiding the Forester Fire Warden.

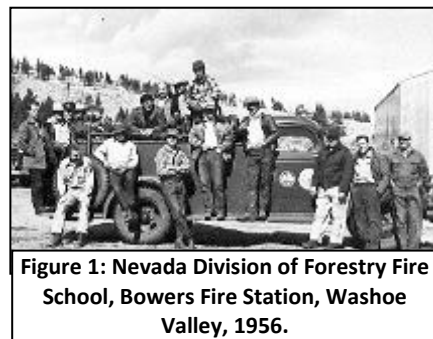
The Forester Fire Warden became a member of the Governor's Environmental Council and the State Commission of Environmental Protection in 1971; in 1979 he was made a member of the Board of Review Concerning Public Lands and the Fire Marshal's Advisory Board. An act of 1971 required those engaged in logging or timber cutting to obtain a license from the Forester Fire Warden, who had the power to suspend or revoke them; persons or businesses owning timber land devoted to another use were required to secure from him a timber conversion certificate, also subject to revocation or suspension.

During the 1973-1974 biennium, the Division reorganized and divided operations between Resource Management and Administrative Services, each headed by an Assistant State Forester. Added later were the Fire Management and Law Enforcement sections. A Flight Operations section came into existence in 1960. Legislation of 1977 brought the State Board of Forestry and Fire Control into the Division of Forestry. The Legislature abolished the Board in 1993.

Congress passed the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act in 1978, providing grants to rural fire departments; in the following year the Legislature entrusted the Forester Fire Warden to administer the state's implementation of the act. Legislation of 1981 permitted the Warden to prohibit or limit certain activities in any Fire Protection District.

The Division of Forestry is responsible for the protection and management of state and privately owned forest, watershed lands, and federal lands under contracts in Nevada. The Division has primary fire protection responsibilities within five organized Clarke-McNary Fire Districts and provides technical assistance to private landowners in forest management, insect and disease problems, windbreak tree programs, greenbelts, and local environmental issues. Forestry provides technical assistance to local governments and rural communities in urban forestry programs.

Among the many programs the Forester Fire Warden and the Division of Forestry have undertaken are: Conservation Camps for penitentiary inmates (since 1959), urban and community forestry, fire prevention campaigns, windbreak tree programs, seed and plant distribution, assistance to volunteer fire departments, range rehabilitation, and a federally assisted Cooperative Forest Management Program. In Civil Defense efforts, the Forester Fire Warden has been the coordinator of state fire services. In 1951, the Nevada State Wildland Planning Committee was reorganized and renamed the State Rural Fire Defense Committee, with the Forester Fire Warden as chairman.



From the beginning, the Forester Fire Warden and the Division of Forestry have worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Among the state agencies cooperating with the Division are the Department of Agriculture, the University of Nevada, and the Fish and Game Commission. Although the powers and duties of the State Forester Fire Warden have expanded since the creation of the post in 1945, the primary ones continue to be: to "Supervise or coordinate all forestry and watershed work on state and privately-owned lands, including fire control... working with federal agencies, private associations, counties, towns cities or private persons."