

CalFire ordered to pay \$30 mil. for Moonlight Fire

By Denny Walsh and Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

In a blistering ruling against CalFire, a judge in Plumas County has found the agency guilty of “egregious and reprehensible conduct” in its response to the 2007 Moonlight Fire and ordered it to pay more than \$30 million in penalties, legal fees and costs to Sierra Pacific Industries and others accused in a CalFire lawsuit of causing the fire.

The ruling is the latest twist in an epic legal battle that began not long after the fire erupted on Labor Day 2007, scorching more than 65,000 acres in Plumas and Lassen counties.

Sierra Pacific, the largest private landowner in California, was blamed by state and federal officials for the blaze, with a key report finding it was started by a spark from the blade of a bulldozer belonging to a company working under contract for Sierra Pacific. But company officials have steadfastly denied responsibility and have accused CalFire and the U.S. Forest Service of conspiring to cover up their own shortcomings that allowed the fire to rage out of control.

Read the whole story