How to Recognize Old Ponderosa Pine Trees that Have Seen Lots of Fire (Because they aren’t necessarily the biggest ones!)
by James P. Riser II

Old trees are typically characterized by:
► Twisted thick trunks and thick limbs
► Sparse, relatively open crowns
► Often dead leaders with flat topped crowns
► Lower branches pruned to above ground level by fire (often charcoal present on them)
► Presence of scar surfaces (“cat faces”) with multiple fire scars at base of trunk

Often the oldest fire history record is preserved on old, fire-scarred stumps and logs:
► “Cat faces” preserved by resin and resistant to rot
► Majority of stump may be rotted, but scars are often intact
► Fire-scarred logs, snags, and old stumps often contain well preserved fire history records
References: