Fire Communication and Education - Reflections on 2004

How do we communicate and educate about wildland fire? Fire is a complex subject – for years we have suppressed fire and as a result in many areas of the country there is a build-up of vegetation – fuel for the fires so to speak. At times and in some places this fuel is explosive – and potentially can have a direct and negative impact on our communities. In these areas it is critical that direct action is taken to prevent explosive fires.

The NPS Fire Communication and Education staff and guests from the park, regional, and national levels met at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in February 2004 to enhance their skills and share strategies. *See related story on page 12.*

Yet there is another side to the fire story – as fire is an integral part of our environment and its character changes from ecosystem to ecosystem. Fire in Denali National Park in Alaska is quite different then fire in Everglades National Park in the southernmost tip of Florida. From sea to shining sea, the fire story differs from location to location.

So how do we communicate and educate about wildland fire? We seek to tell the stories. And at times it is a balancing act – as the stories in fire and fuels management cover a variety of activities including fire education, prevention and information; hazard fuel reduction programs; fire suppression and preparing for responding to fire; wildland fire use; prescribed fire; wildland-urban interface activities and actions; incident response (fire and non-fire alike); and community outreach efforts. In essence, the overarching story of wildland fire management is the role of fire, when it's appropriate, how it is managed, and how people relate to their local and global ecosystems when fire is a part of their world.

The National Fire Plan was launched in 2000 and a direct result in the National Park Service (NPS) was the initiation of a new program area, now known as Wildland Fire Communications and Education. The program encompasses pieces of past NPS fire outreach activities, has developed some new emphasis areas, has adapted some of the best practices of existing programs from our partners, and has continued to build and enhance our interagency partnerships in fire management. The NPS Fire Communications and Education Program can look back on the lessons learned over the past four years as well as look forward to the continued growth and development of the program and the partnerships that have evolved. This document presents highlights of the 2004 program nationwide.

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For More Information

If you are interested in learning more about the National Park Service Fire & Aviation Program, please visit us on the web at http://www.nps.gov/fire.

Fire Management Program Center - Idaho

Roberta D'Amico, Tina Boehle, and Russ Rivera

Highlights from 2004

Located at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, the NPS Fire Communications and Education staff focuses on providing assistance and consultation to NPS regional and field units by developing tools to enhance the program. NPS Communications and Education also focuses on developing partnerships between NPS Fire Management and other disciplines as well as with interagency partners to facilitate the fire communication and education program to both to internal and external audiences. Highlights of 2004 follow:

- Taking advantage of the electronic age, the NPS Fire and Aviation Website (both the internal and external) has increased the distribution of information while simultaneously providing a 24/7 resource for NPS employees and our partners. The website provides educational opportunities about wildland fire through sections such as "Understanding Fire," while also providing information about specific fires in the national parks through "Fire News." Tools to publicize significant fire activities can be found through "Fire Stories." All of these resources are successful due to the contributions of National Park Service employees in the field.

- Continuing to provide information about the qualification requirements to become an information officer and encouraging employees to seek these development opportunities has had a direct effect on NPS employees and increased the number of qualified NPS personnel performing as Incident Information Officers.

- Developing a searchable NPS Information Officer database has enabled more NPS personnel to be located when needed for incidents and allowed managers to search for specific skill sets for assignments.

- Participating in various interdisciplinary conferences with targeted audiences who want and need to know more about fire management.

The National Association for Interpretation - National Interpreters Workshop is one of the venues that the NPS Fire Communications and Education Program attends annually to encourage a greater understanding ot wildland fire management as well as to encourage interpreters to become trained in incident information skills (Tina Boehle/NPS Photo).

- Contributing to interagency cooperation and collaboration through participation as a member of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Wildland Fire Education Working Team (WFEWT).

- Partnering within the interagency community in various capacities, as well as non-governmental partners, such as The Nature Conservancy and Eastern National Cooperating Association brought new opportunities in 2004. The website efire.org, which highlights books about wildland and structural fire and fire leadership is a result of the partnership with Eastern National Cooperating Association. Likewise, interdisciplinary partnerships within the National Park Service remain important and were strengthened over the past year. In November 2004, the first meeting of staff from fuels, ecology, and education and prevention information took place to see how better collaboration and efficiency could take place in the NPS.

For additional information about the program, visit the Fire and Aviation website located at http://www.nps.gov/fire or contact the national program staff for the NPS Fire Communications and Education Program, located at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho (see page 19 for contact information).

Denali National Park - Alaska

Morgan Miller

First of Its Kind, Denali Project Successful

In the spirit of the National Fire Plan, a hazard fuels project completed in 2004 in Denali National Park exemplifies a pro-active, cost effective, collaborative approach to reduce the wildfire risk to communities.

The Alaska National Park Service Western Area Fire Management Program worked in cooperation with Ancor, Incorporated, a private 8a small business and disabled veteran contractor from Anchorage, Alaska. Local residents made up 65% of employees hired by Ancor. The project involved removing approximately 24 acres of vegetation, classified as hazard fuels, from the vicinity of buildings in the headquarters area of Denali National Park and Preserve. The park sought ways to creatively use the biomass that resulted from the vegetation removal. The work began on September 1 and concluded on October 12, 2004. In preparation for a potential wildfire event, Ancor created defensible space around park structures in order to reduce the risk of property damage and improve safety for employees, visitors and fire suppression crews. Being the largest hazard fuels project to have taken place in a high visitation frontcountry area rendered the project the first of its kind in Alaska's national parklands.

Aerial view of Denali Headquarters area (NPS photo).

Approximately every 60 years fires burn in the headquarters area; the date of the last fire in the area was 1924. Eighty years of vegetation growth around structures resulted in the Denali headquarters being part of the wildland urban interface. Thick, dense vegetation complicates the ability of firefighters to safely control a wildfire and protect structures. This contributed to an already difficult task, as it takes additional effort and resources to protect structures in Denali due to the park's relative remoteness. All of these factors contributed to a significant need for a hazard fuels project at Denali. The Denali hazard fuels project represents a significant accomplishment. Being the first of its kind, the fire management team established a precedent and template for Alaskan parklands. Due to forecasted large quantities of biomass and limited disposal venues, fire management staff arranged to recycle the material. Denali used cut trees for historic cabin restoration, a dendrochronology project for the Murie Science and Learning Center, and as firewood for backcountry cabins. Furthermore, fire management established an atypical partnership in order to reduce biomass removal costs. Ancor transported cut vegetation to a staging area for use in a reclamation project at the Usibelli Coal Mine site in Healy, Alaska, 12 miles north of Denali's park headquarters.

Carl Waters and FMO, Dan Warthin (NPS photo).

The inception of the project, a written project proposal, began in the mid 1990s. Previous superintendents supported the project, however, Paul Anderson, the superintendent at the park during the project, pushed it forward. Western Area Fire Management and the Regional Fire Communication and Education Specialist focused on two project priorities - effective operational and communication strategies. The fire management team utilized the Incident Command System (ICS) throughout the project in order to provide employee and visitor safety, foster a teamwork ethic, provide succinct communication channels and incentives to Denali employees for support of the project. Fire Management wrote an Incident Action Plan and updated the division assignment list daily. Weekly updates, a two part lecture series on fire risk and Firewise concepts, in conjunction with an open door policy, proved effective in increasing the understanding of the project's objectives. Carl Waters, president and owner of Ancor, Incorporated stated, "The strategies implemented during the hazard fuels project worked wonderfully. This project would not have been such a success without the partnerships."

Grand Teton National Park - Wyoming

Lori Iverson

Community Trained to Fill Fire Information Needs

Training presented through the Teton Interagency Fire Education program in June 2004 increased local community members knowledge of fire management and developed a pool of individuals equipped with new skills who potentially can assist with information and outreach efforts in future fire management activities. Comprised primarily of teachers, retired individuals, and current or past federal employees, the class of 17 participants expressed an interest in assisting with fire information on a short- term, interim basis if needed. The class was specifically designed for the general public with limited knowledge of fire management policies and procedures, such as the Incident Command System (ICS) used in managing wildfire incidents.

A class offered in June through the Teton Interagency Fire Education office shared fire information with local community members. The course was specifically designed for the general public with limited knowledge of fire management policies or the Incident Command System used in managing wildland fire incidents (Lori Iverson/NPS Photo).

Participants began by discussing what happens when a fire is first reported, brainstorming definitions and operations associated with both suppression fires and wildland fire use incidents. The instructors detailed management considerations such as the cause of the fire, location, time of season, and severity. The students used recent local incidents to review past management decisions. Discussions then led to tactics and available resources (both equipment and people) that may be utilized to manage a fire. Information on complexity levels, national preparedness levels, and the Incident Command System rounded out the initial session and gave participants a general overview of the wildfire organization.

While not part of the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS), the class served to pique interest and increase knowledge of local fire management activities (Lori Iverson/NPS Photo).

Additional sessions focused on the information function of a wildfire. Students were shown key sources for gathering information including ICS- 209 forms, local and national web pages, and news releases. Basic fire information and community outreach duties such as distributing fire updates, fielding questions, and conducting roving operations were also covered. These are the areas where additional assistance is frequently needed and local personnel with knowledge of the area can be very beneficial. Safety and documentation practices were a key component of the program.

Evaluations for the first-time course were very positive:

- *Good introduction for the uninitiated.*
- *Great information. It really helped to pull bits and pieces together for me.*
- *All the information seemed very useful - nothing was greater than the whole message.*
- *Instructors disseminated a great mass of information in a very comprehensible, comfortable manner.*

While not part of the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS), the class served to pique interest and increase knowledge of fire management activities. It will also allow local residents an opportunity to share their knowledge and become involved in the Teton Interagency Fire Management Program.

Lassen Volcanic National Park - California

Scott Isaacson

Bluff Fire Provides Opportunities

On June 28, 2004, a significant lightning storm passed over Lassen Volcanic National Park. During the next few days, ten different lightning caused fires that were detected in the park were evaluated to determine if they would achieve resource management objectives as established in the park's Fire Management Plan (FMP). The FMP addresses when fires should be managed to allow fire to perform its role in shaping the park's ecosystems. As a result of the assessment, one fire in the park's Suppression Management Unit was suppressed; the remaining fires were all managed for resource benefits (Wildland Fire Use) – allowing fire to take on its natural role in the park.

Cindercone and Bluff Fire at Lassen Volcanic National Park (Mike Lewelling/NPS Photo).

The majority of these fires received significant rainfall and eventually went out on their own. The Bluff Fire had been smoldering under the forest canopy for several days. By July 6, 2004, only two fires remained active - the Creek Fire and the Bluff Fire.

The Creek Fire eventually went out naturally and the Bluff Fire crept along, smoldering and torching out some small trees. When the Bluff Fire started there were still small patches of snow on the forest floor and it took two months for the fire to reach 100 acres. As fuels dried out and weather conditions improved, the Bluff Fire grew to 955 acres. A Fire Use Management Team was ordered as the fire became too complex for the park staff to manage.

A Fire Use Team took over management of the fire on September 3. By the 9th, the fire had grown to 3300 acres. During that time there were Red Flag wind conditions and fire danger indicators above the 97% percentile. Even with the extreme fire conditions, fire effects over the entire burn area were excellent. There was a true mosaic of fire intensities, and some areas required the extreme weather to achieve the desired results.

When the decision was made to manage the fire as a Wildland Fire Use activity, it was apparent that the fire would need very active management strategies to be successful. During the first week, a checkline was put in place so that the fire would not spread to the south toward the Drakesbad Guest Ranch. During the large acre burn days, the fire was actively herded by burning off fuels and checking the fire spread on trails. With a final perimeter of 15 miles, only a total of 2 miles of hand line was constructed. This hand line was put into place as a checkline for holding as well as mitigating smoke into the local communities. The day after the line was in place smoke intrusion into the town of Chester was negligible.

During the Bluff fire, the public learned via radio, television, newspaper articles and personal contacts in and outside the park, that the Bluff Wildland Fire Use was being actively managed and that the project involved all the tools and skills used on a suppression fire. The information function was taking every opportunity to emphasize that the management of this type of fire requires a long range commitment by fire staff utilizing all

Bluff Fire reflected in Snag Lake (Mike Lewelling/NPS Photo).

necessary fire fighting resources. Some of the other key points highlighted were:

- Public and firefighter safety is always first and foremost in every fire management activity.
- Fire history records indicate that natural fires occurred approximately every 4 to 70 years in Lassen Volcanic National Park depending upon the ecotype. Fires which closely resemble historic fire cycles help create a healthy forest or ecotype and encourage new robust growth and improve forage and create a diverse habitat for all wildlife.
- All prescribed fire projects and wildland fire use activities utilize techniques to reduce unwanted smoke impacts; however during these projects smoke will settle into valleys and low-lying communities in the evening and morning hours. Park management worked closely with the local Air Quality Districts to mitigate smoke impacts.
- The Lassen Volcanic National Park Fire Management Program is consistent with the National Fire Plan, Federal Wildfire Management Policy, the Lassen Volcanic General Management Plan, the Resource Management Plan and the Lassen Volcanic National Park Fire Management Plan.
- The National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service work cooperatively to reduce hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface.

For the full text of the story, go to: http://www.nps.gov/fire/public/pub_fir04_lavo_bluffwfu.html.

Bluff Wildland Fire Use and Twin Lakes (Mike Lewelling/NPS Photo).

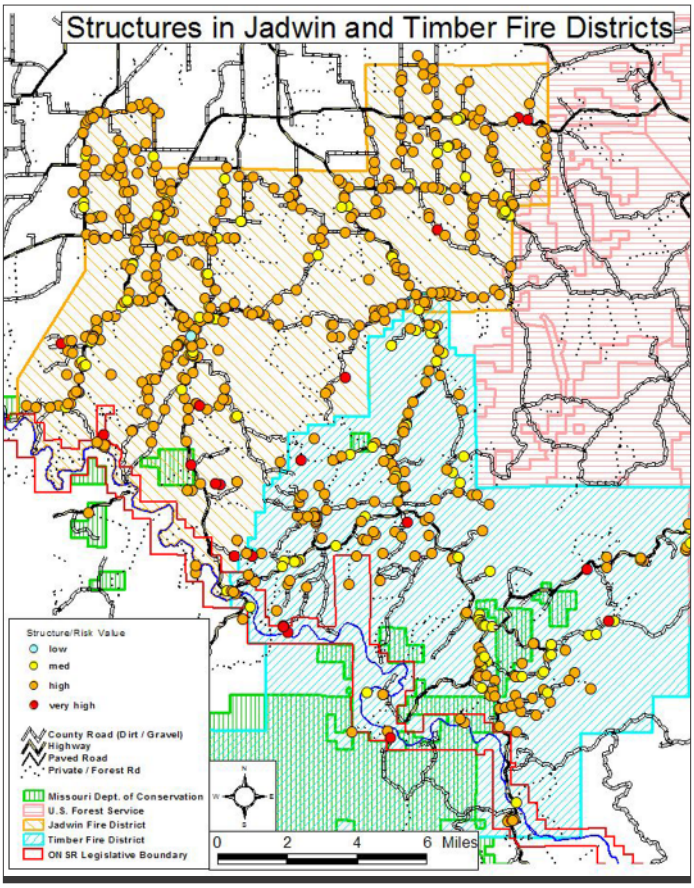
Ozark National Scenic Riverways - Missouri

Angela Smith

2004 Highlights

2004 was a very diverse and productive year for the Fire Education, Prevention and Information program at Ozark National Scenic Riverways. From the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Mapping Program and Fire Management Plans to school programs, implementing Rural Fire Assistance funding and participating in prescribed fire projects, the Fire Education, Prevention and Information program was involved in some way.

Now in its third year, the WUI Mapping Program, a partnership between Firewise, the Student Conservation Association (SCA), six rural fire departments and the National Park Service, evaluated and mapped a total of 2,228 structures. The WUI Mapping Project was featured in a Firewise exhibit at the national Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) conference in



Mapping completed by Student Conservation Association interns.

2004. In addition, the SCA volunteers completed the fire history - fire occurrence maps for Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, and George Washington Carver National Monument. This information will be incorporated into the Fire Program Analysis (FPA) system which facilitates the fire management planning and budgeting process.

The Fire Education, Prevention and Information Specialist at Ozarks, Angela Smith, acted as Contracting Officer's Technical Representative for the Ozark, Wilson's Creek, and George Washington Carver Fire Management Plans (FMP), which included developing Environmental Assessments and Findings of No Significant Impact. A Biological Evaluation (BE) was developed for the Ozarks to analyze impacts of the fire management program on five endangered species. The BE was the final compliance piece necessary to obtain approval of the FMP from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. George Washington Carver's FMP was approved by the Regional Director in September 2004.

Ozark NSR completed six prescribed fires during 2004, for a total of 2,743 treated acres which were enhanced by distributing information to the neighboring communities and press releases to the media. Angela also developed a mobile prescribed fire wayside exhibit, which will be used on future prescribed fires, to explain to passers-by why the area has been burned, and how prescribed fire benefits the ecosystems. Additionally during 2004, Angela presented educational programs to three and four year-olds, children in the Head Start program, and seventh and eighth-graders.

The Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) program at Ozarks and Wilson's Creek brought $68,934 to a total of nine rural fire departments. This money will be spent to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to rural fire departments, and help the fire departments with maintaining the WUI maps which document hazardous conditions within their jurisdictions.

Building on the accomplishments achieved in 2004, 2005 is expected to be outstanding!

Point Reyes National Seashore - California

Jennifer Chapman

Point Reyes National Seashore Partners for Success

Parks in the San Francisco Bay Area are conveniently located near numerous colleges and universities, creating almost unlimited possibilities for partnering with higher education. In 2004, fire education partnerships were developed with the Multi-Media Studies program at College of Marin, and the Communications Studies Department at Sonoma State University. Both programs include an internship course which requires students to gain communications experience with an outside organization.

A dynamic interactive map of the new Fire Management Units at Point Reyes National Seashore was produced by a student from the College of Marin, Multimedia Studies Program.

Internships in the Multi-Media Studies program at the College of Marin require a non-paid 50-hour project in print publishing. After developing a Site Profile with the college, and providing a list of project descriptions,

two students selected the park for their internship experience. The resulting projects were a site bulletin on Fuel Treatments in Northern Spotted Owl Habitat, and a web-based Interactive Map of Fire Management Units at Point Reyes. The site bulletin was developed according to National Park Service graphic and design standards. Two illustrations, layout design, and draft text were completed. The interactive map was developed with Flash animation software which was integrated into web page templates from the Point Reyes National Seashore website. A map of fire management units (FMUs), vegetation maps, and FMU descriptions were extracted from the Point Reyes Fire Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement, and enhanced with photographs. This created a more dynamic, visual, and concise experience of fire management plan concepts which complemented the longer, more technical full length document.

Both the site bulletin and the interactive map projects surpassed the 50-hour internship required by the college. As a result, these projects were extended through purchase orders for additional project hours at $16 per hour. The interactive map was completed with approximately 70 additional hours. This included final integration with the Point Reyes website and launching pages. The site bulletin with completed with approximately 10 additional hours and after a complete text review by the interdisciplinary park staff.

To view the interactive map of FMUs, visit to the Fire and Fuels Planning Page on the Point Reyes website at: http://www.nps.gov/pore/fire_fuel_planning.htm.

A task agreement for 3 future 180-hours internships with students in the Communications Department at Sonoma State University was also written and signed in 2004. These internships will involve 180-hour projects in either print or video media. The projects include researching and writing a series of success stories, and producing video clips of fuels treatment projects. Students will receive $1,500 for each of these internships, which averages approximately $8 per hour.

Media internships in Fire Communications and Education can build relationships between parks and educational institutions, and engage both students and faculty, as well as target audiences, in fire management issues. Through this type of partnering, shared mission goals of educating students and the general public are also achieved.

Pacific West Region - California

Submitted by Jennifer Chapman, on behalf of Carol Jandrall, Scott Isaacson, Jennifer Chapman, Deb Schweizer, Jody Lyle, and Marty O'Toole

Camp Smokey!

In 2004, the National Park Service in the Pacific West Region increased its involvement in Camp Smokey, an annual interagency event at the California State Fair. Involvement in 2004, coordinated by Whiskeytown Fire Education Specialist Carol Jandrall, succeeded in incorporating a more prominent fire ecology message into the overall program. Other themes presented were indoor fire safety, the dangers of wildfire, emergency preparedness, defensible space, stewardship through minimum impact recreation and recyling, and Smokey's 60th birthday. The event took place from August 19 through September 5, 2004 at the Cal Expo fairgrounds outside Sacramento.

Camp Smokey is a permanent installation which includes 4 miniature houses, a trail, a fire lookout tower, a Firewise garden, and a grove of redwood trees. The California State Fair is a significant attraction, and was featured in the travel section of the New York Times earlier in the summer.

NPS participation during 2004 included 3 fire education specialists, 2 fire program Student Conservation Association (SCA) interns, 2 interpreters, 1 camping program manager (park guide), and 1 trails crew member who is also a volunteer firefighter.

One of four miniature houses used at Camp Smokey (NPS Photo).

Camp Smokey is a family-oriented event conducted by interagency staff and partners from across the state. The experience is activity-oriented, much like a junior ranger program, in which completion of a passport booklet by visiting multiple stations earns participants a take home award. In addition to reaching the guests at the fair, the event is also part of an outreach effort directed at Generation Green, an organization of high school students in the Fresno area from multi-cultural and primarily farming backgrounds.

Fire Education, Prevention, and Information Specialist, Scott Isaacson (Lassen Volcanic National Park) speaks to children and parents at Camp Smokey (NPS Photo).

Camp Smokey is a permanent installation at the California State Fair (NPS Photo).

In 2005, the Pacific West Region Fire Education, Prevention, and Information work group hopes to expand outreach in conjunction with Camp Smokey.

Rocky Mountain National Park - Colorado

Scott Sticha

Highlights of 2004 Fire Prevention Week

Fire management staff from Rocky Mountain National Park participated in several local events to help celebrate National Fire Prevention Week. An interagency team comprised of National Park Service, U. S. Forest Service and Estes Park Volunteer Fire Department personnel, distributed Firewise educational materials at the Elkfest weekend festival in Estes Park on October 2nd and 3rd. The children enjoyed the free educational materials while local citizens took advantage of the Firewise information.

Fire Education Specialist, Scott Sticha, speaks to a homeowner about Firewise practices (NPS Photo).

Park staff also accepted an invitation to participate in the 2nd annual Fire Prevention Open House at the Grand Lake Fire Station on October 6th. In addition to staffing the park fire information display, a $4,400 Rural Fire Assistance grant was also formally presented to the Grand Lake Fire Protection District. The fire department volunteers staffed several home safety demonstration stations and awarded participants with smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, courtesy of a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant. Both Smokey Bear and Sparky the Fire Dog made popular guest appearances.

National Fire Prevention Week is sponsored annually each October by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to commemorate two fire incidents that occurred 133 years ago. The first and most famous involved Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicking over a lantern in a barn and starting the Great Chicago Fire. Lesser known, but much more deadly and destructive was the Peshtigo Fire in Wisconsin, which also started on October 8, 1871. To learn more visit http://www.nfpa.org/FPW.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area - California

Marty O'Toole

Partnering for Success

At Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), 2004 seemed to begin with the wildfires that swept through California in October and November 2003. In 2004 southern California had an extended dry period, which served as additional motivation to enhance the existing partnerships and reach out and build new ones.

Partnerships with both land management and fire management agencies in the Santa Monica Mountains are crucial to the success of the NPS Fire Management Program. The fire education staff continues to share best practices and coordinate efforts with their local partners in order to meet similar objectives. A sampling of activities in 2004 follows:

- Staff attended meetings of the Watershed Fire Council, which advocates for fire management programs in southern California on a political level, sharing information with federal, state and local agencies.

- After the wildfires of 2003, homeowner associations were understandably concerned with the safety of properties that border Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). Staff attended monthly board meetings to remind residents of the parks participation in their protection; this outreach set the groundwork for increased collaboration.

- First acquainted during a public meeting for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the SMMNRA Fire Management Plan, fire education staff established a positive relationship with the emergency preparedness coordinator of the City of Malibu, California. The city has an active interest in expanding the knowledge of defensible space practices, which lines up precisely with park goals.

- Staff had the unique opportunity to share information with Greg Tedder, Metropolitan District Operations Manager for Royal National Park in New South Wales, Australia. Their ecosystem is quite similar to southern California, as well as their complex wildland urban interface issues. The networking possibilities for new educational techniques and successes are very promising.

- The SMMNRA fire management program staff serves the Mediterranean Coast Network, which includes Channel Islands National Park and Cabrillo National Monument. Fire education staff continues to actively participate in the revision of the Channel Islands Fire Management Plan, including the writing of the Prevention section.

Fire education staff actively facilitated numerous sessions of National Park Labs: Studies of Wildfire Ecology. This program, targeting high school students and developed with grants from Toyota USA Foundation through the National Park Foundation, was developed to provide both teachers and students with practical curriculum-based scientific experiences that build appreciation for park resources. The park's Division of Interpretation & Education worked closely with fire management staff to continually update and improve its presentation. Fire education staff has also presented information at several teacher, partner and staff workshops which highlighted the region's struggles with the growing population in the wildland urban interface.

The park sponsored an intern from the Student Conservation Association's Fire Education Corps during the first half of 2004. Her assistance with outreach amongst some of the park's smaller partners will prove invaluable in the near future, as the need for a unified fire education and prevention message continues.

At Santa Monica Mountains, fire education and prevention efforts build strong partnerships. Future opportunities include increasing the number of field level programs to encourage further community participation in their own protection; coordinating with local fire agencies; and reaching out to the education community. One of the strengths of the fire education program is that community protection is a common goal for all.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks - California

Jody Lyle

Leading Fire Communications into the Future

It was quiet in the forest except for the sound of snowshoes crunching through the white powder… and an occasional giggle. Two dozen National Park Service fire educators, dressed in bright layers of fleece and wool, followed a park ranger as he navigated through a maze of giant, ancient trees. Scarred by fire but still dependent on it, the trees stood as examples of survival for the onlookers who were getting ready for a challenging future.

This scene occurred in February 2004 at Sequoia National Park when 21 participants attended a three-day workshop to strengthen the National Wildfire Communications and Education Program. *Leading Fire Communications into the Future* was jointly organized by the NPS National Fire Communications and Education Program and the staff of Sequoia National Park.

Fire educators in Giant Forest with Chief of Interpretation, William Tweed (Jody Lyle/NPS Photo).

Kicking off the workshop, Superintendent Richard H. Martin expressed Sequoia's pride in supporting the national program by serving as host. "As a manager, I know the importance of communicating with the public and our partners about how fire management serves the National Park Service mission," Martin said.

Workshop participants enjoyed more than a dozen programs and panel discussions presented by NPS regional and park personnel, United States Geological Survey (USGS) researchers, air quality regulators, public relations professionals, and social scientists. The organized sessions offered valuable opportunities for participants to share ideas, review accomplishments, and trouble-shoot current challenges.

One of the major themes for the workshop was fostering a productive relationship between interpretation and fire management. Interpreters are an integral part of any education program because they don't just disseminate information, but make it meaningful and relevant for the audience. As Sequoia National Park's Chief of Interpretation stood below the scarred trees in his snowshoes, he created meaning for his current group of fire educators. He talked about ecology, resource management, politics, and public expectations – all subjects that the participants could take home and personalize to meet future challenges in their own areas.

Angela Smith, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, did a presentation about Wildland Hazard Assesment Methodology - WHAM (Tina Boehle/NPS Photo).

The National Wildland Fire Communications and Education Program consists of approximately twenty employees working to promote fire management activities across the nation. These employees are scattered around the country in national, regional, and park offices. Due to this geographic distribution, annual gatherings are an important part of evaluating and ensuring the success of the program over time. The Sequoia workshop was the third gathering of its kind, the group having met previously in Boise in November 2001 and Santa Fe, New Mexico in February 2003.

Shenandoah National Park - Virginia

Barb Stewart

Wildland Hazard Assessment Methodology (WHAM) in Virginia

Shenandoah National Park now has better, more accessible information to help it provide improved protection to structures within and near its boundary. This was made possible by a partnership of a National Park Service Northeast Regional Office-sponsored Student Conservation Association (SCA) Fire Education Corps (FEC) and an award-winning methodology developed by Shenandoah National Park employees.

The SCA FEC used the Wildland Hazard Assessment Methodology (WHAM) to complete the work. WHAM was developed by employees of Shenandoah National Park and was beta-tested by the SCA-FEC Virginia Partnership Team. The crew conducted fire assessments and collected GPS data from communities along the park's boundary and from all structures within the park. The information was collected in a Microsoft Access database and mapped in ArcView.

Shenandoah National Park's concession management specialist Robbie Brockwehl stands with Student Conservation Association intern Joe Mierzwinski. Thanks to his work using the Wildland Hazard Assessment Methodology (WHAM), she and the park's concessioner have good information at their fingertips to help them better protect historic cabins, modern lodge units and other buildings (Barb Stewart/NPS Photo).

The assessment data consists of home evaluations based on wildland-home fire prevention standards, topographic features, well mapped roads of and to the communities, resident and official contacts, and local fire department contacts and response capabilities. Data was collected by the SCA FEC, referred to as the "Virginia Partnership Team" during the summer of 2003. In 2004, additional structures within the park were assessed. After sorting this data, two hard-copy collections were organized. One collection has information on structures maintained by ARAMARK, the Park's concessionaire; a second showed all high-risk structures within the park, both ARAMARK and NPS. The latter was provided to the park's fire management office. Hard copies provide a handy reference. The computer database, which is easy to update, can be used to create maps and other products to assist planning. This work was completed in 2004 and subsequently the data collected has been used in the creation of the park's Fire Management Plan which is in development.

Whispering Pines cabin at Skyland in Shenandoah National Park (Aramark).

Hazard ratings at the boundary are available to Fire Management staff and will become available to local fire departments and those communities assessed by WHAM. Data is also available to Shenandoah NP for wildfire prevention planning and response efforts. Additional steps remain, including meetings with local fire departments to discuss the fire assessment work. These and other activities are part of building an effective partnership of homeowners and fire professionals who share the goals of providing for public and firefighter safety and protecting homes from wildfire.

Southeast Region - Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virgin Islands

Michelle Fidler

Sharing Information and Education Resources Across Nine States and Two Territories

In 2004, the Fire Management Program in the Southeast Region distributed wildland fire education toolboxes to education and interpretive staff at parks with fire management programs regionwide. The regional Fire Education, Prevention, and Information Specialist compiled a list of Firewise resources for the southeastern United States, developed an on-line fire information officer toolbox, and an annotated bibliography of fire education materials for the Southeast Region.

Wildland Fire Education toolboxes distributed to parks contained educational resources and references for staff use (NPS Photo).

Three fire management program displays and two mannequins dressed in fire gear were circulated around the region to enhance education and outreach efforts. Exhibits were utilized prior to and during planned fuel treatments or high fire danger periods, as well as displayed at community events and conferences including the Second International Wildland Fire Ecology and Fire Management Congress and an Alabama Firewise workshop held in associated with the Alabama Liveable Cities Conference. A new, more portable, banner stand display was developed for use as a traveling resource as well.

In order to share information with park visitors and the public, numerous parks across the region have made park fire management plans and/or fire and fuels management information available on their websites. Additionally, parks are increasingly using the National Park Service (NPS) Fire News reporting system to post updates on active fire management projects to the NPS Fire & Aviation website at http://www.nps.gov/fire. Parks have also demonstrated interdivisional cooperation both in planning and managing active fire management projects in parks.

Other park projects incorporate opportunities for park visitors to understand and support the role of fire in ecosystems and the management of fire and fuels in the National Park Service. These include ranger-led programs, environmental education programs, junior ranger activities, signs, brochures, and exhibits. Parks also work closely with neighboring communities and the media to share information about their programs. An example of one such effort was a WKYU public TV broadcast segment, which first aired in May, featuring the fire management program at Mammoth Cave National Park. The fire management programs at Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park also received media attention and were featured in an article in the July/August issue of the *National Fire & Rescue* magazine.

WKYU Filming Prescribed Burn Operations at Mammoth Cave National Park (Vickie Carson/NPS Photo).

This year, projects funded by NPS as contracts under the National Fire Plan Community Assistance Program continued as part of ongoing coordination and collaborative efforts among stakeholders and partners across the region.

One example of this program is the Southern Area Risk Assessment. This interagency risk assessment for local, state, and federal lands will provide a clearer picture of the overall potential for wildfire and its associated problems. Once completed, fire agencies will be better equipped to identify communities at risk, prioritize fuels treatments, and determine the extent of wildland urban interface issues. This information is important to have when communicating wildfire risks to the public.

In Alabama, the Jefferson-Shelby Wildland Urban Interface Advisory Council distributed educational CD-ROMs and *Alabama Reader* newspaper supplements to 5th grade students. These materials enable students to learn about the role of fire and fuels management.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission trained representatives from their districts statewide in Firewise principles. These individuals are now actively developing a collaborative approach to Firewise education and outreach across local, state, and federal jurisdictions. Additionally, training for teachers and the distribution of educational CD-ROMs will benefit students and communities.

The North Carolina Division of Forest Resources is active in reaching out to communities in the wildland urban interface by distributing Firewise newspaper supplements and other educational materials.

The Florida Division of Forestry is undertaking numerous educational projects to promote the role of fire in Florida and Firewise principles. These include a statewide prescribed fire awareness media campaign and the successful Fire in Florida's Ecosystems teacher training program. Support is also provided for bi-lingual outreach to promote the Firewise message in south Florida. Other community projects include the distribution of fire education, prevention, and mitigation brochures, as well as newspapers supplements, mobile displays, and education CD-ROMs.

These collaborative outreach efforts demonstrate the dedication of regional support staff and fire management programs at more than 45 parks regionwide. The Southeast Region Fire Management Program is dedicated to collaborating with stakeholders and partners to promote recognition, acceptance and support of the role of fire in ecosystems and the management of fuels in the National Park Service.

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area - California

Carol Jandrall

A Personal Encounter with Fire

Note: Carol Jandrall, the Fire Education, Prevention, and Information Specialist at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area was personally impacted by wildfire during Summer 2004. Her story is a different type of reflection from 2004.

Wildfire came to Whiskeytown National Recreation Area and threatened my community and my home on August 14, 2004. This was my most difficult assignment in my 14 year career with the National Park Service. I overcame many fears and emotions on a personal and professional level.

It was a hot, dry and windy day, a watchout situation for anyone in the fire world. The call came across the radio at 2:30 pm "Wildfire on Trinity Mountain Road." The first engine on scene called the fire at 200 acres and moving at a rapid spread uphill. As a firefighter on duty and the Fire Information Officer for the park, I drove toward the fire watching the column building above the hills. My concerns immediately turned toward the small community of French Gulch only a few miles away, my home. My husband and I own and operate the historic French Gulch Hotel, built in 1885.

Arriving on scene, the fire was on both sides of the road, the smoke was heavy and making the road dangerous for travel. I stopped traffic to allow for safe access for incoming engines and crews. As the media arrived, my duties focused on fire information. Within 30 minutes the fire had jumped across the creek and was heading up the canyon toward French Gulch. The Sheriff was evacuating

French Fire entering the canyon above French Gulch (NPS Photo).

the town. This was one of many tough moments for me as my job and my personal life crossed. I was a crucial part of the incident, yet I needed and wanted to go to my home. The media wanted to go with me and I took them. It was 3:00 pm in the afternoon, yet it was pitch black and smoky. I could hear the wind pushing the fire as it popped and hissed up the hill. Trees were falling and power poles were popping. I was afraid, and the media was quiet. At one point I decided to turn around, only to fall into place with a strike team of structure engines a few minutes later. We arrived in French Gulch about 3:30 pm. The firestorm was arriving in town.

Tough decisions were coming in all directions as I struggled between being the Information Officer and the homeowner. My town was on fire, my neighbor's homes were burning. My home, the French Gulch Hotel, was threatened. Fire was on both sides of the canyon, huge flames were all around the hills. I could feel the heat on my face. A California Department of Forestry (CDF) Information Officer arrived in town, he looked at me and the two media I was with and told us to "get to the school as the whole town is going to burn." I told the media I would take them to the school but I was coming back. In unison, they responded that I had to stay and they would go to the school. Under normal circumstances I would not have done this, but this was not normal circumstances. I let them walk down the street to the school as I headed up my driveway. For the moment my Information Officer duties were over as the hot wind and orange flames loomed over my historic hotel.

For the rest of the afternoon I was in firefighter mode. My husband, who is a volunteer firefighter, and I sprayed water on our building, underneath falling embers. We walked around and around the hotel looking for embers

Fire front closes in on the Historic French Gulch Hotel (NPS Photo).

that could ignite the old wood. We didn't say much to each other that afternoon, but our faces spoke volumes. We also saved a neighbor's garage and tried unsuccessfully to save two neighbor's homes, including one that belonged to an eighty year old woman. It felt like a movie in slow motion as I watched my neighbor's homes catch fire and the huge historic Odd Fellows Hall burn to the ground. I remember running down the street and meeting with a fellow Whiskeytown firefighter in front of the flaming Hall. He just shook his head and said, "It was not savable, and they were going to try and save the store".

Night finally came, embers glowed in the debris, single trees torched. The fire continued to burn north. It made a run at the top of the ridge. I watched silently as a friend's home, on top of the ridge, burned. Words stuck in my throat. I was overwhelmed by the devastation.

Five hours after the start of the fire I returned to the origin. The Incident Command Post had been set up and a Type 1 team had taken over the fire. As I pulled up, I was greeted by NPS employees and other fire friends. They were glad to see me. We briefly talked about the firestorm and what had happened. Afterwards, I met with the information team and returned to my Fire Information Officer role. It was difficult for me, but I wanted to be a part of the information efforts to help the team but most importantly to help my community.

French Gulch is a small historic community. I know almost every person who lost their home. I know the ones who didn't have insurance, the eighty year old woman who has lived there all of her life. I know the seven kids by name that lost their homes. The first few days were eerie. The power was out, trees and power poles lay across the road. The hillsides were so black, the fire had burned hot, leaving only skeletons of trees and shrubs. Most residents were not allowed back into town. It was a ghost town. I walked the streets looking at each house that had burned. I walked in the backyard of the hotel, looking at how close the fire had come. I was so glad it didn't burn, yet deeply sad for the ones that did. Those first few days I spent time talking and providing information to the residents that had not left. Some found their way in through back roads or walking up the creek. I saw my neighbor right after he discovered his home of 20 years was gone. It was hard to find the words to say to him, I just hugged him. As the days went on the residents were allowed to return. I drove up and down the streets. I went to their homes. I went to the local bar. The information hub was stationed on the porch

of the hotel. This was where we would meet each day and a central location for the media. One of the hardest parts of the assignment was that I couldn't get away from it. After my shift was over I went home to my burned community. Several families who lost homes were staying with us, in the hotel. I continued to hear the stories, the phone rang constantly. I know this took a toll on me. I couldn't leave though, I needed to be there.

My role as an Information Officer, homeowner and business owner overlapped. I helped the media to get story ideas. I gave information on the gold rush history. It became difficult when they wanted to do stories on me as the business owner. I have always tried to keep my government job and my business separate. This was hard to do; my emotions were just underneath the surface. I found myself giving updates on the progress of the fire and then the fact was raised that I was the owner of the historic hotel. So there I was standing in full nomex and National Park Service hat, talking about my business and my personal feelings.

The French Fire was one-hundred percent contained at 13,000 acres one week later. It burned 26 homes and the historic 1914 Odd Fellows Lodge. Two historic buildings are left in town, the French Gulch Hotel and E. Franck and Company dating back to the 1850's.

When fall arrived, cooler weather came with it. The first rains came and the smell of smoke was finally gone. Deer, in their winter coats, were back in town. Subtle changes will be taking place as new growth emerges from the ash. Neighbors are helping each other and the community is healing and will continue to build in the years to come.

The French Gulch Hotel, post-fire.

Zion National Park - Utah

David Eaker

2004 Highlights

The Fire Information and Education program at Zion is coordinated by the Fire Information and Education Specialist (FIES) whose primary responsibility is to establish and coordinate internal and external fire information, education and prevention programs in order to present an integrated interdisciplinary fire program within Zion (and the other Utah cluster parks) and the National Park Service (NPS) as a whole.

FY 2004 was another busy year for the Information and Education portion of Zion's Fire Management Program. The park experienced 24 wildfires, including one wildland fire use and initiated one major prescribed fire (the 4,400-acre Clear Trap Prescribed Fire) during the season, with the FIES serving as Information Officer on all these incidents. These incidents required the production and dissemination of fire information, both internally and externally, and in a variety of mediums, including press releases, media interviews, park memos, posters and webpages.

Fire information station during the Clear Trap Prescribed Fire (David Eaker/NPS Photo).

During the year the FIES produced three fire information/education related working plans for Zion including, an Information/Education Plan (Strategy), a Fire Restriction Plan and a Prescribed Fire Information Plan. The FIES also produced numerous fire-related brochures, posters, handouts, site bulletins, and other information for Zion

and the NPS. The messages were delivered in an assortment of mediums, both directly and indirectly, and by a wide variety of individuals, including the FIES, fire staff, park interpreters, resource management staff, and information officers assisting the FIES.

One of the major accomplishments of the year was the creation of a wildland fire webpage - www.nps.gov/zion/Fire/Index.htm, which is hosted by Zion's main webpage. The site contains a wealth of information regarding wildland fire management in Zion and the National Park Service.

As the Fire Information Officer on a Type II Incident Management Team, the FIES was assigned to two wildland fires in 2004, one in Utah and the other in Idaho. The FIES also served as an information officer on three wildland fire assignments in Color Country and three prescribed burns, including two in Bryce Canyon and one in Zion. All of these fire events, especially the prescribed burns, depended heavily upon the timely and accurate dissemination of information to the public, staff and media.

A solid burn plan coupled with some appropriately-timed weather events combined to make the Clear Trap Prescribed Fire the largest prescribed fire in the park's history an overall success (NPS Photo).

The FIES serves as the NPS representative and Chairperson for the Color Country Interagency Information and Education Committee, a very active group that produces and disseminates wildland fire-related information and educational materials/programs. This committee is part of a larger group known as the Color Country Interagency Fire Management Area that coordinates fire management activities throughout southwestern Utah and northwestern Arizona. In 2004, this group was presented with the prestigious Pulaski Award, a national award that represents its achievements in interagency cooperation and coordination in managing wildland fire.

The FIES also serves as the NPS representative on two other interagency committees, the Great Basin Fire Education and Prevention Committee and the Utah Fire Communications Committee. As well as the FIES duties in the Fire Management Program, the position also assisted with the Public Information Program in the park. This required the production of numerous press releases, media interviews, a park profile, managing the park's website and being a member of various park committees and work groups.

With the groundwork having been laid in 2004, 2005 will reap the benefits of last year's preparation.

NPS Fire Communications & Education Program Contact Information

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Park Contacts			
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Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, California	Jody Lyle	jody_lyle@nps.gov	(559) 565-3703
Whiskeytown NRA, California	Carol Jandrall	carol_jandrall@nps.gov	(530) 359-2304
Yosemite National Park, California	Deb Schweizer	debra_schweizer@nps.gov	(209) 372-0333
Zion NP, Utah	David Eaker	david_eaker@nps.gov	(435) 772-7811

Fire Communication & Education Products

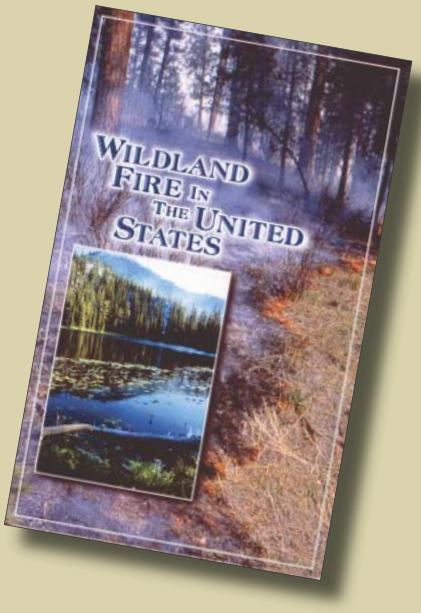
Wildland Fire in National Parks Brochure

*Side 1 (left) - **Wildland Fire in National Parks** includes headings for "What is Fire?" "Fire as a Natural Process;" and "Different Places, Different Plants, Different Fires."*

*Side 2 (below) - **Managing Wildland Fire** includes the headings "Preparing Parks for Fire;" "Tools of the Trade;" "Learning from and about Fire;" and "Fire Smart, Fire Safe."*

Contact your Regional Fire Communications & Education contact (see page 19) to obtain copies of this brochure.

Wildland Fire in the United States Brochure



A project of National Wildfire Coordinating Group-Wildland Fire Education Working Team (NWCG-WFEWT), articles within the brochure include: Fire-Reducing the Risks, Fire in the Right Places at the Right Times, Fire Can Benefit Everyone, Partners-Now and Always, and The Story of Fire. The publication also includes an ecosystem map highlighting a selection of vegetation types and representative areas. Order this brochure from Symbols.gov.

NPS Wildland Fire Communications & Education Strategic Plan - Completed in May 2004

Tiered from the National Park Service Strategic Plan and the Wildland Fire Strategic Plan, the National Park Service Wildland Fire Communications and Education Strategic Plan seeks to focus the program over the upcoming several years.

VISION for the National Park Service Wildland Fire Communications and Education Program

Recognition, acceptance and support of the role of fire in ecosystems and the management of fire and fuels in the National Park Service.

MISSION of the National Park Service Wildland Fire Communications and Education Program

To pro-actively support the National Park Service Wildland Fire Management program through a comprehensive communication and education program that emphasizes wildland fire management and the role of fire in the ecosystems.

Available online (internal) at http://inside.nps.gov/documents/education_strategy_final_05182004_2.pdf.