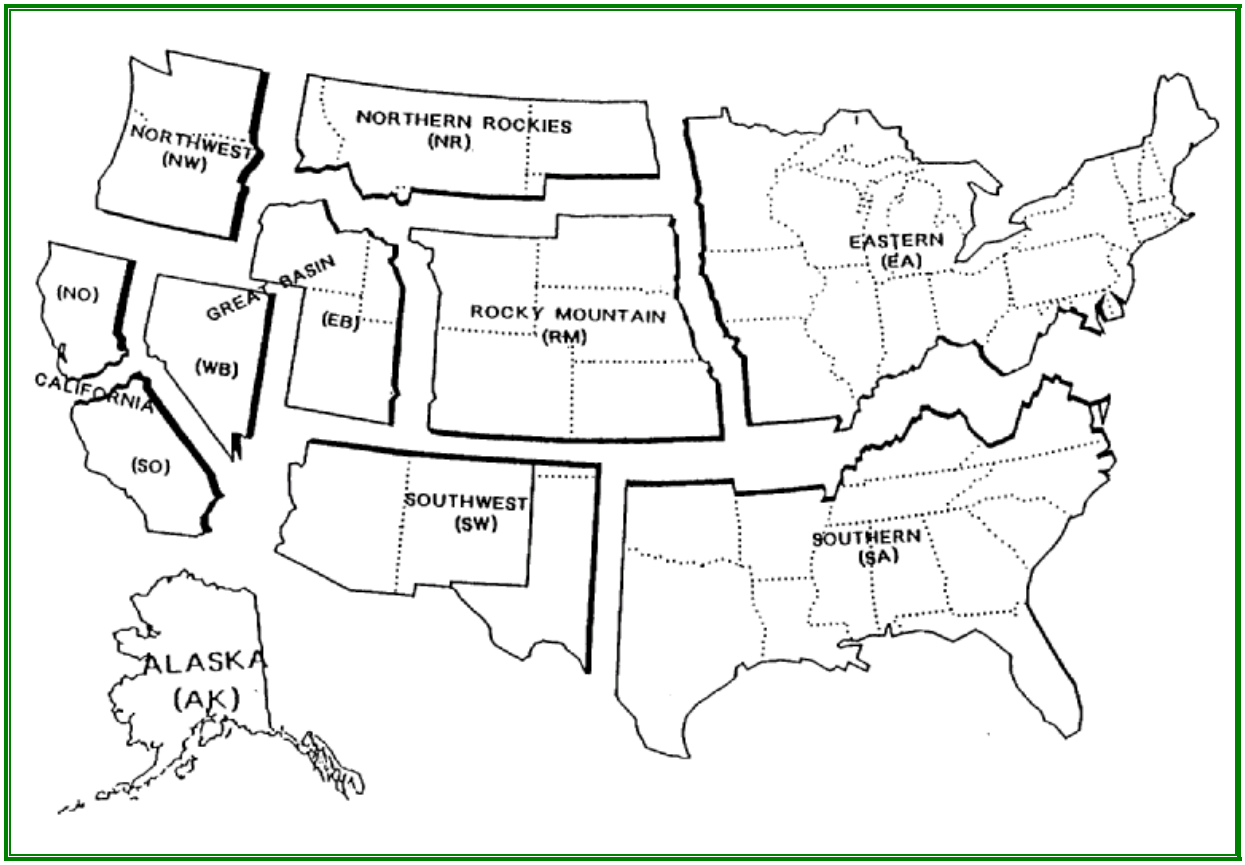
USDA FOREST SERVICE

2006 NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER REPORT



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National Smokejumper Program

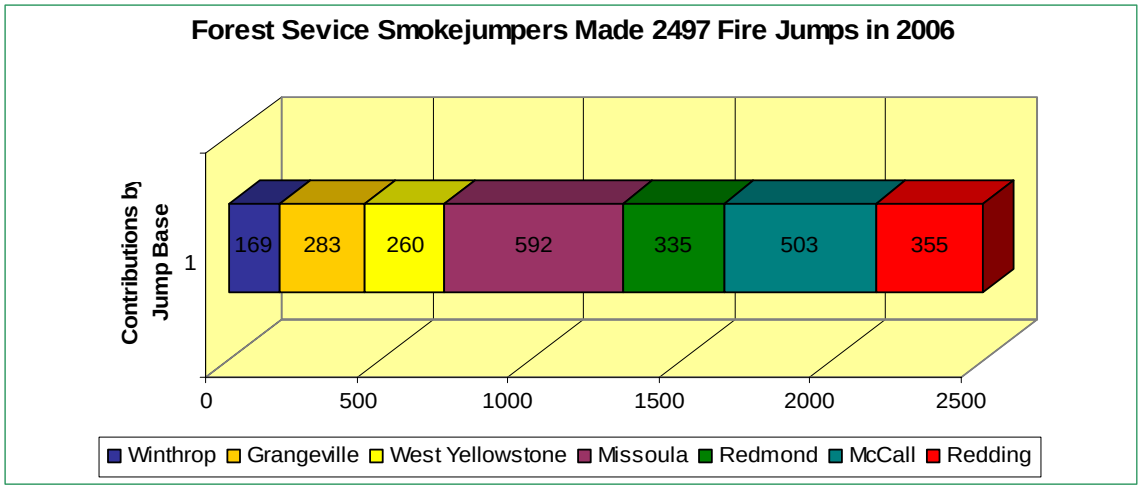
USDA FOREST SERVICE

2006 REPORT

U.S. Forest Service Smokejumpers Mission

The U.S. Forest Service Smokejumpers mission is to implement programs that support the land stewardship and public safety goals of the U.S. Forest Service. At its core, our job is to protect human life, defend communities and property at risk, and conserve natural resources. In cooperation with our federal, state, and local partners, we are the workforce that natural resource and emergency managers look to for safe and effective response to wildfires and other emergencies, and who carry out a wide-range of conservation projects that serve to promote our Nation's legacy of healthy and productive forests and grasslands.

This report reflects the contributions that Forest Service Smokejumpers made on initial attack incidents, as well as supporting the full spectrum of fire response needs, and the agency's Natural Resource agenda. The National Smokejumper program continues to provide a workforce of competent and experienced service oriented firefighters, and fire management practitioners.



Permanent Forest Service Base Locations

Smokejumper Base	Region	Aircraft	Smokejumpers
Grangeville	**R-1**	**1**	**31**
Missoula	**R-1**	**2**	**63**
W. Yellowstone	**R-1**	**1**	**40**
McCall	**R-4**	**3**	**62**
Redding	**R-5**	**2**	**38**
Redmond	**R-6**	**2**	**35**
Winthrop	**R-6**	**1**	**20**
Total:	**Seven Bases**	**4 Regions**	**12 Aircraft**	**289 Smokejumpers**

Spike Base Locations

Spike Base Location	**Region**	Duration(days)	Number of Smokejumpers	Fires Jumped	Ground Action	Total Fire Assignments
Miles City, MT	R-1	51	10	9		9
San Bernardino	R-5	57	10-20	20		20
Silver City, NM	R-3	66	20	21	5	26
Total Activity	**All**	**174**	**40-50**	**50**	**5**	**55**

2006 USDA Forest Service Fire Response from the Seven Permanent Bases

Person Days Smokejumper Fires	Person Days Crew Action or Ground Assignments	Person Days Single Resource Assignments	Person Days Fire Assignments (8 hours = 1 day)	Average Person Days Per Smokejumper on Fire Assignments
7725	1171	4703	13599	47

Resource Management Activities from Forest Service Bases

Person Days Prescribe Fire	Person Days Other Resource Management	Average Person Days Per Smokejumper in Resource Management
3721	8037	41

2006 Season Overview

REGION ONE

Grangeville- Grangeville employed 29 smokejumpers and 2 detailers for the 2006 season. The Grangeville smokejumper base staffed 106 fires with 414 smokejumpers dispatched from the air center; these numbers include Fire Jumps, Fire Use Fires, and single resource dispatches

The first smokejumper fire staffed out of Grangeville in 2006 was on June 28th. Sixty initial attack fires were staffed this season with 293 jumpers through aerial delivery, with another 12 initial attack fires staffed by other means. This is the most smokejumpers dropped on fires out of Grangeville since 1994, when 332 jumpers were delivered on 113 fires. 2006 ranks fifth since 1951 for the number of jumpers dropped out of Grangeville. There were fifteen days between July 6th and September 11th when Grangeville was unable to staff fires due to lack of available smokejumpers.

Missoula- The Northern Rockies fire season was above average in all aspects this season. The number of fire jumps made by Missoula jumpers out of the Missoula Base (310) was 142% of their 10-year average of 219. Nationally Missoula jumpers made 602 fire jumps, which was 143% of the 10-year average of 420. The total number of fires jumped out of Missoula was 61 (131%) and nationally Missoula jumpers staffed 191 different fires which was 146% of a five year average.

Fire season in Region 1 was very busy from early July through mid September. In mid September significant rainfall slowed down initial attack activity, although a dry fall lead to resource requests into late October. Missoula Smokejumpers filled 108 single resource assignments this year which was 125 percent of the 7 year average of 86 for 902 days. Over the last ten years the Missoula Smokejumpers have made a very concerted effort to get jumpers trained and qualified in overhead positions. This year 23% of all suppression time was spent in overhead positions. Missoula was able to get two trainees signed off as ICT3, as well as 38 other task books.

This year the jumpers had three different requests for FLE, for 49 person days. Two of them for fire line construction using a total 20,000 feet which is almost 5 miles of line constructed. One of the requests was for hazard tree mitigation.

West Yellowstone- West Yellowstone Smokejumpers had a very active season in 2006. With the increase in personnel numbers this year, West was able to effectively supply jumpers for single resource and booster assignments regularly all season while still fully staffing their jump platform. West Yellowstone supplied 35 individuals for single resource assignments and 33 for booster requests.

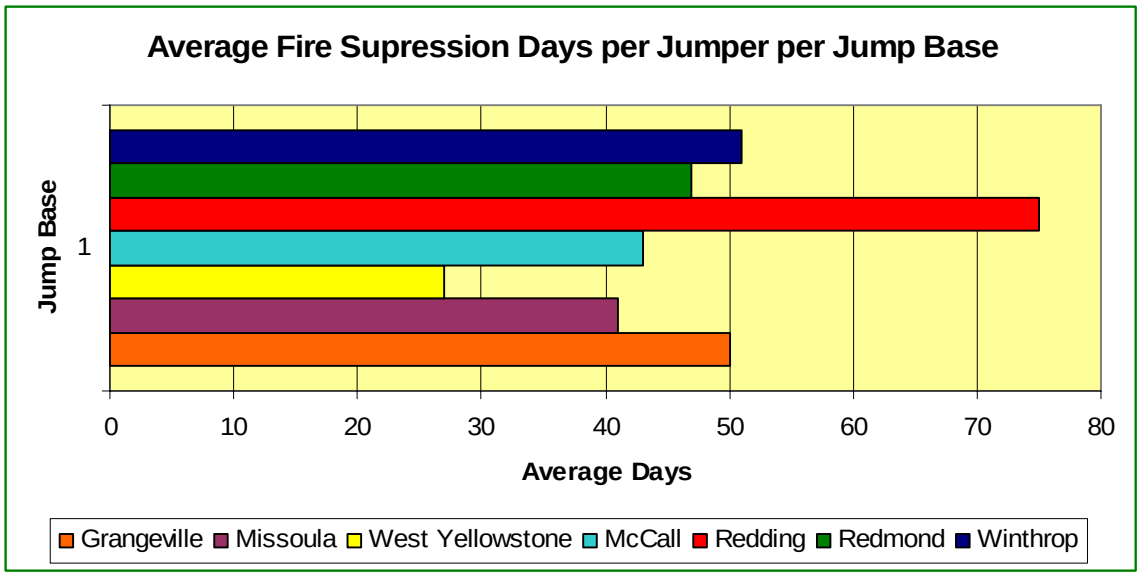
West Yellowstone Smokejumpers jumped 52 fires for a total of 302 fire jumps in 2006. Of these 52 jump fires 38 (73%) were assisting units in the Greater Yellowstone Area, of which 14 (27%) were on the Gallatin NF, their host unit.

REGION 4

McCall- The 2006 McCall smokejumpers started spring with the precipitation levels at 157% of normal for the local Payette Forest. This early season moisture was followed by a deficit in June, July and August resulting in the most active jump fire season locally since 1994. On 17 different occasions during the fire season McCall was "jumped out", with no boosters available.

A total of sixty-two smokejumpers trained in McCall, making 524 fire jumps nationally including 412 I.A. fire jumps out of the McCall Base. Single resource assignments for smokejumpers have increased in the last few years, and the McCall base encourages jumpers to gain qualifications as well as valuable experience by taking these assignments. In 2006 McCall jumpers filled approximately 150 single resource assignments this season.

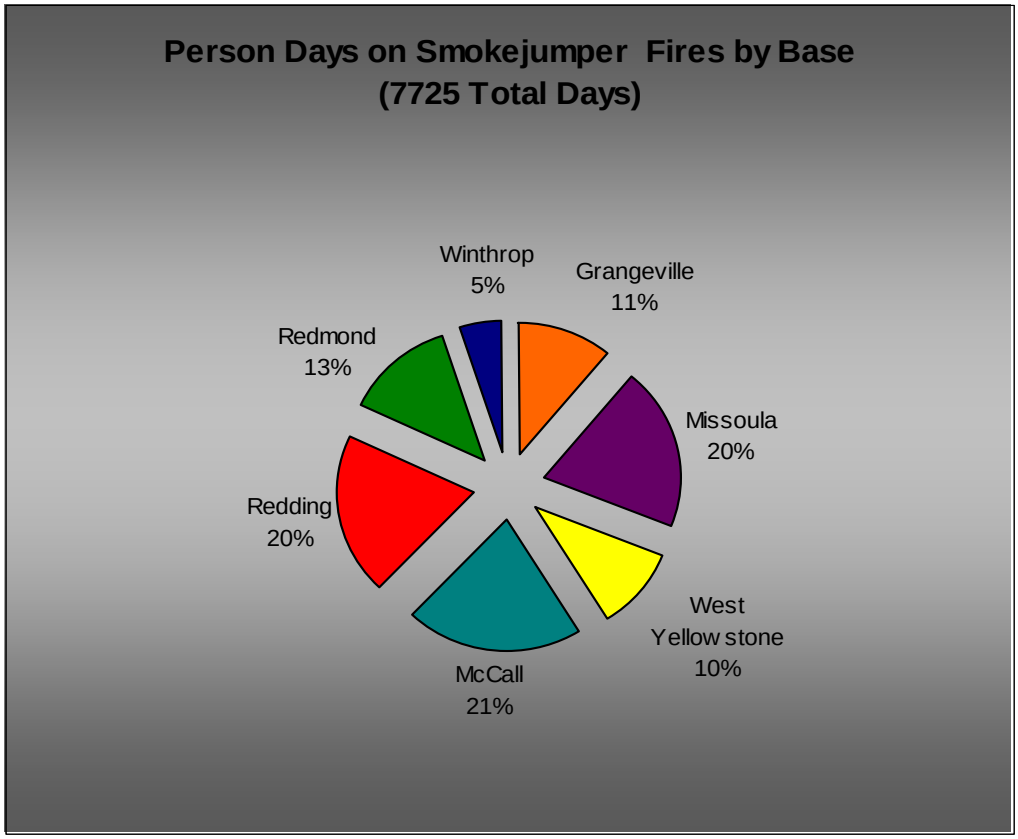
The response to a number of fires this season was to consider them as Wildland Fire Use (WFU) incidents. Many units such as the Payette Forest have been initiating WFU on many fires within the wilderness for years. This summer some fires in the South Fork Salmon River drainage were managed as WFU's outside the wilderness. Increasingly, jumpers are working with Fire Use Modules to handle planning and implementation of management techniques on these WFU's. McCall smokejumpers took assignments on WFU incidents on 9 occasions for a total of 145 person days.



REGION FIVE

Redding- Smokejumper activity in Region five was record breaking in 2006. Smokejumpers parachuted to 116 fires for a total of 476 fire jumps. The 116 fires broke the old record of 95 fires which was set in 1999. Smokejumpers accomplished a great deal in 2006 and were invaluable in helping the region deal with the above average fire season.

The first fire jump in the region was June 24th on the Inyo National Forest. The last of the year was September 24th on the Plumas National Forest. In this three month period smokejumpers were utilized on 14 National Forests and one National Recreation area within the region. In addition to providing firefighters to these units, smokejumpers also provided the necessary leadership. Out of the 116 fires smokejumpers staffed in 2006, a smokejumper was the incident commander on 92 of these fires. Additionally, smokejumpers demonstrated the commitment and ability to stay until the end by calling 75 of these fires out.



Region Six

North Cascades- The fire season of 2006 was moderate for the North Cascades Smokejumper Base in terms of initial attack activity, but well above average for large project fires. The Okanogan region on the east slopes of the northern Washington Cascades had all the potential for a busier than normal fire season owing to persistent drought and dry fuels, particularly at the lower elevations. Consistently warmer and drier record setting conditions for July, August and September set the stage for large fire potential.

North Cascades had 34 fires for a total of 161 jumps out of the base. The first fire jump of the 2006 season was made on June 8th and the last on September 29th. Of these fires the majority (21) were made on the Okanogan/Wenatchee National Forests, followed by the North Cascades National Park with 6. Other users included the Malheur National Forest, Colville National Forest, Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, Umatilla National Forest, and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

During the 2006 season North Cascades personnel provided Northwest forests with ICT3's and Type 3 command organizations on the Mount Hood Complex (Mt. Hood N.F.), and the Tripod Fires (Okanogan/Wenatchee N.F.). Single resource fire assignments including trainee positions were also completed on several large fires throughout the United States. These assignments accounted for over 500 work days, and included Crew Boss, Felling Boss, Task Force Leader, Division Supervisor, Air Tactical Group Supervisor, Operations Section Chief, Safety Officer, and Field Observer.

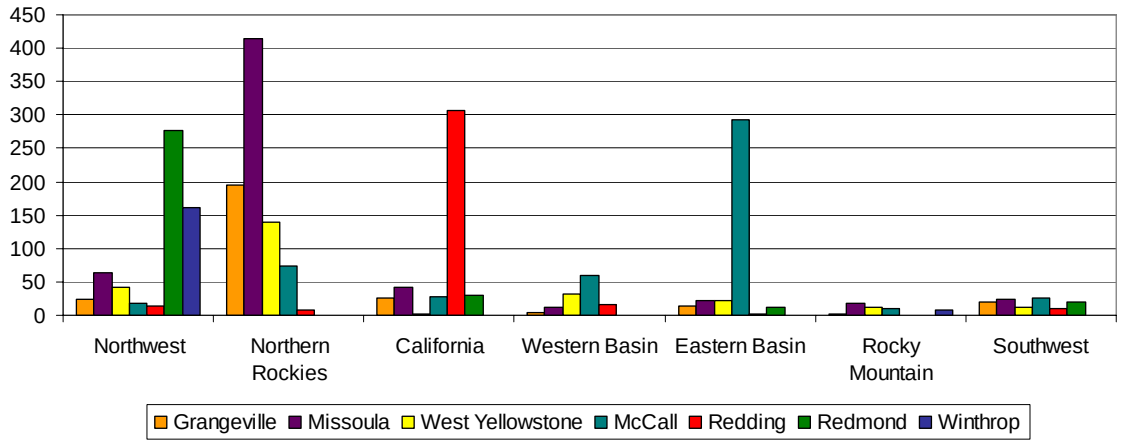
Redmond- The summer of 2006 ended up being above average for number of fires jumped and personnel dropped on fires. Wildfires were initial attacked out of Redmond as far south as the Plumas in California.

Out of the Redmond smokejumper base 94 fires were staffed for a total of 435 jumps. The first fire jump occurred on May 16th and the last on October 12th. The 94 fires are approximately 134% of the Redmond 10-year average of 70 fires and the 435 jumps is 138% of the10-year average of 315 jumps.

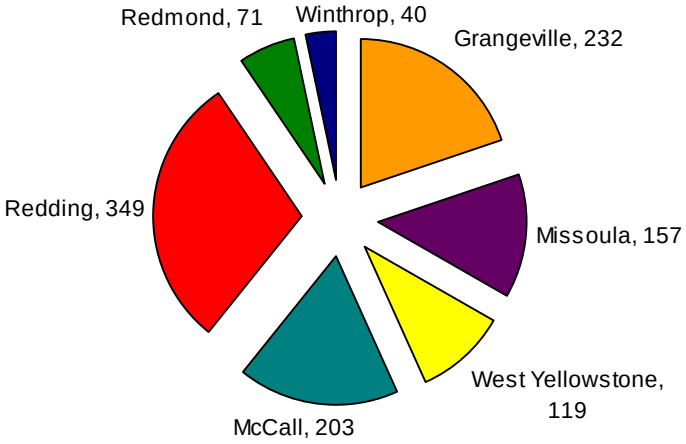
Redmond responded to those 94 fires in 16 separate land management areas. The Umatilla and Willamette National Forests were the primary users with 13 and 32 fires respectively. Other users were the Mt. Hood, Okanogan/Wenatchee, Deschutes, Malheur, Ochoco, Burns District BLM, Winema, Umpqua, Rogue, Oregon Department of Forestry, and Crater Lake National Park.

2006 Statistical Analysis

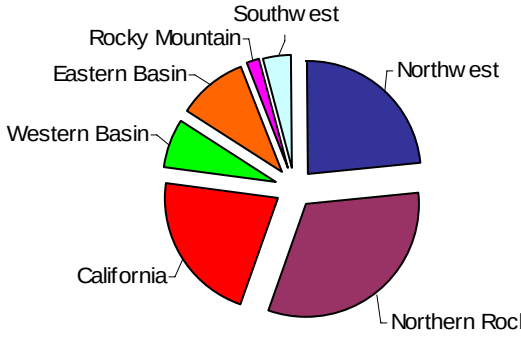
2497 Fire Jumps Nationwide by Forest Service Smokejumpers

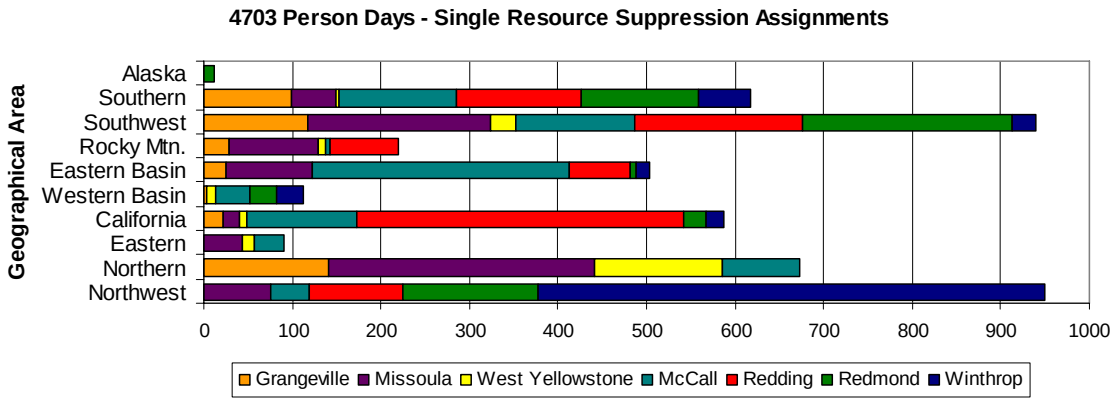


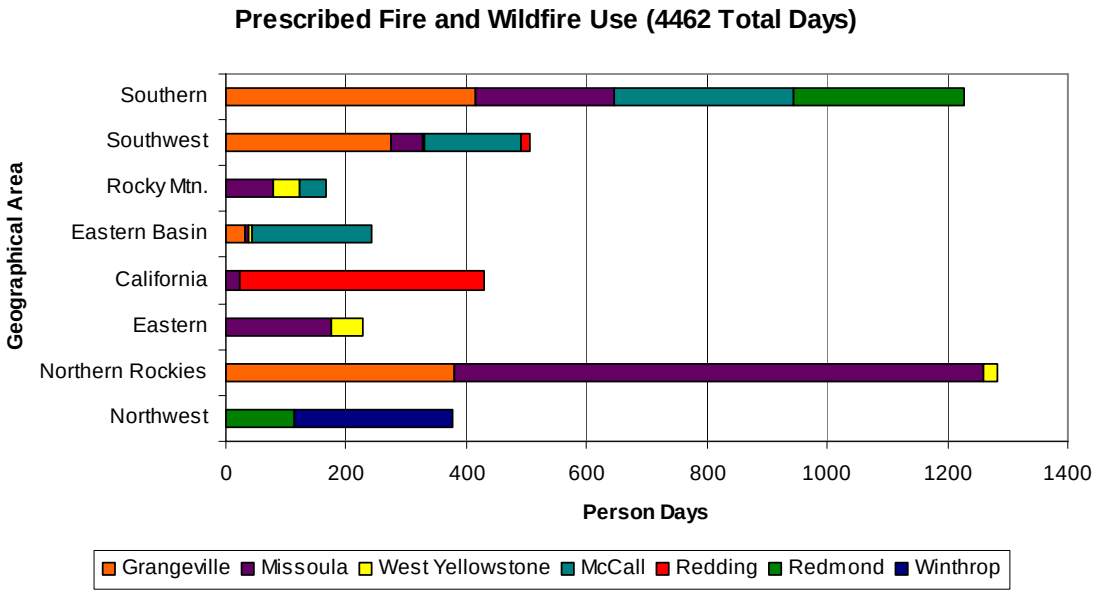
Ground Action Fires-Person Days (1171 Days Total)

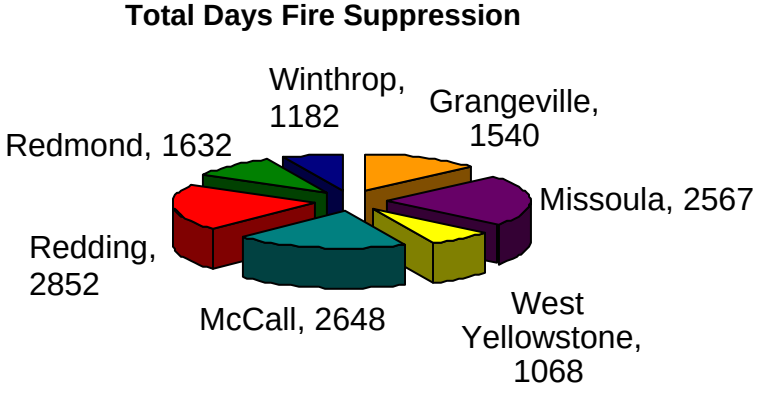


Total Number of Fires Jumped per Geographic Area 487 Fires

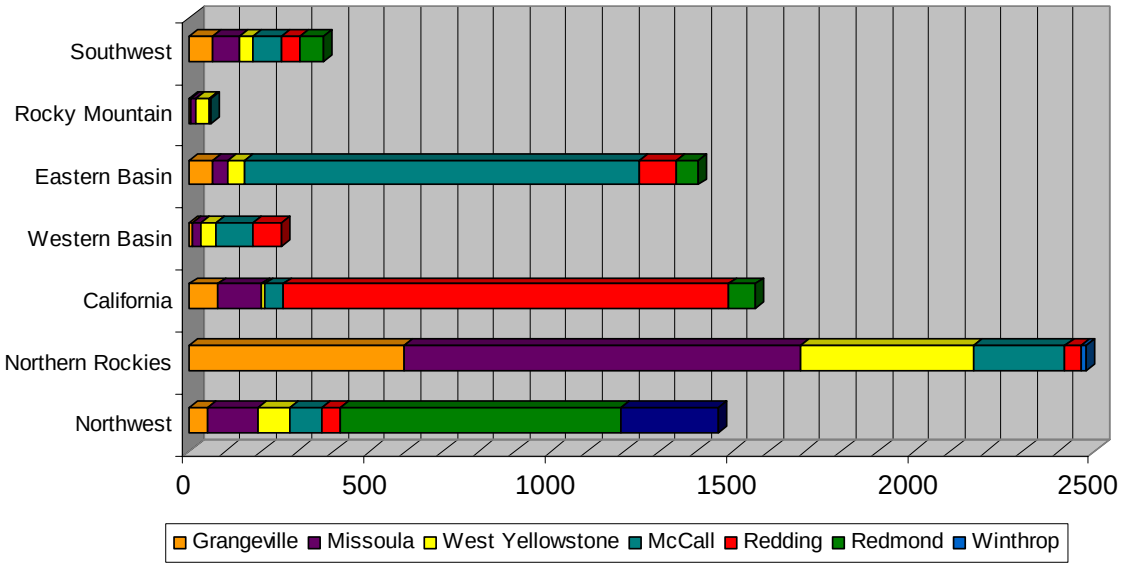



4703 Person Days - Single Resource Suppression Assignments
Geographical Area
Alaska
Southern
Southwest
Rocky Mtn.
Eastern Basin
Western Basin
California
Eastern
Northern
Northwest
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
800
900
1000
Grangeville
Missoula
West Yellowstone
McCall
Redding
Redmond
Winthrop

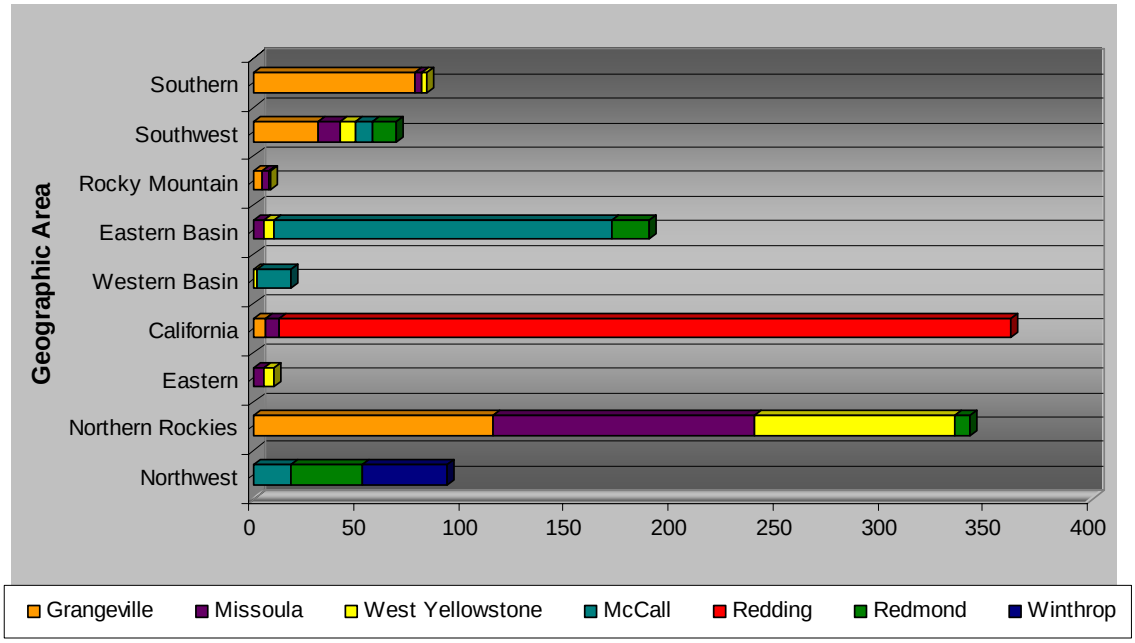

Prescribed Fire and Wildfire Use (4462 Total Days)
Geographical Area
Southern
Southwest
Rocky Mtn.
Eastern Basin
California
Eastern
Northern Rockies
Northwest
0
200
400
600
800
1000
1200
1400
Person Days
Grangeville
Missoula
West Yellowstone
McCall
Redding
Redmond
Winthrop


Total Days Fire Suppression
Winthrop, 1182
Grangeville, 1540
Redmond, 1632
Missoula, 2567
Redding, 2852
McCall, 2648
West Yellowstone, 1068

Person Days Fire Jumps



1171 Person Days Ground Crew Suppression



SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

The following narratives are provided as examples of significant actions or "saves" during the 2006 fire season. It is likely smokejumper actions on these fires were instrumental in saving taxpayers millions of dollars in suppression costs.

Redding Smokejumpers

Crab Fire – While finishing a fire detection flight on the San Jacinto District, Jumper 52 was diverted to an emerging lighting fire east of Lake Arrowhead near Crab Flats. Within ten minutes, the jump ship arrived and was first on scene; the fire was sized up at five plus acres and was burning in remnants of the old Willow Fire. The prevailing fuel type was grass with fire-killed slash and brush and a moderate to fast rate of spread was observed. The eight smokejumpers were dropped initially and then both cargo and airtanker drops occurred simultaneously. This was essential in catching this fire as it began to pick up intensity in the flashy fuels. With accurate retardant and helicopter bucket drops, the jumpers and two local engine crews were able to contain the fire to less than ten acres.

Missoula Smokejumpers

Hill Coulee Fire- On July 16th Missoula Smokejumpers were dispatched to Eastern Montana for IA and to set up the Miles City spike base. Nearing Miles City the jumpers were redirected to the Jordan area, along the Missouri River. Communication was established with the ASM module on scene which directed them to staff the Hill Coulee Fire (there were two ranches and other seasonal structures in the fires path). Jump operations were completed and the smokejumper ICT-3 and ICT-3(t) briefed and assigned positions, then started burning out along the county road nearest the structures. The IC contacted dispatch with a size-up and for permission to open up some two-tracks on the eastern side of the fire, leading down to the river through the CMR. Permission was given, and a jumper and the graders on-scene commenced with the operation. The rest of the night was spent burning out, using roads, fallow fields, old two tracks and handline. Numerous spotfires were corralled, requiring SEAT's at one point to catch them; otherwise the crew relied on grader line or used contingency lines. Besides the 9 jumpers, there were two graders and about three groups of local ranchers assisting. Early the next morning the fire experienced a nearly 180 degree wind shift. The IC promptly contacted dispatch, requesting more resources, especially firing devices and air support. The unfinished line leading down to the Missouri River was threatened, and the crew was out of fuel and fusees; however, the jumpers used alternative forms of firing, and were able to continue the burn-out. About 0900, as the winds increased, a BLM station

manager from Jordan arrived with water and a case of fusees. With help from a medium helicopter, the crew continued the burn out, but a spot crossed the line below, forcing the crew to fall back to the next contingency line, which was soon lost, also. It was now afternoon, over 100 degrees, with steadily increasing winds. The ASM returned on-scene, and reprioritized the fire for immediate use of the heavy air tanker. With help from a P-3 load of retardant, the crew completed the burn-out and finished the line. The fireline held through an unannounced major wind event that night and the next morning. With the line secure, the jumpers asked for and received permission to accompany the local ranchers who were preparing to respond to structure protection needs on a nearby incident, the Chalk Buttes fire. The crew tied in with a Division Supervisor from that fire, helping save three structures and burning out line for the rest of the day. That night, the incoming Type 1 Team released the jumpers back to the Hill Coulee fire, to retrieve their jump gear and demob to the Miles City spike base. The Hill Coulee fire proved to be the only one caught in the initial attack/extended attack phase at 3500 acres.

West Yellowstone Smokejumpers

Mill Fire- On July 23rd 2006 a load of jumpers was dispatched to an escaped campfire in the Mill Creek drainage of the Paradise Valley. After the 14 minute flight, the 8 jumpers quickly scouted and assessed the situation then called for more help to contain the growing blaze. Two helicopters were sent with buckets. A second load of smokejumpers from West Yellowstone was dispatched with a Type 3 IC to assume command of the fire and to aid in the placement of pumps and hose lays. After completing the drop Jumper 13 was utilized as Air Attack and observer which addressed unseen spots and coordinated the 2 helicopters and smokejumpers on the ground. By the time of the arrival of 2 hotshot crews the next morning the fires progression had been stopped at 11 acres.

The jump spot used was adjacent to the road at the base of the fire. Engines driving to the fire had a minimum of 50 minutes response time when jumpers could get there in less than 15 minutes. Again, having multiple loads of jumpers let forces gain control of the incident preventing it from becoming a Type 1 or 2 incident.

Grangeville Smokejumpers

Long John Fire- In mid-August, several larger fires demobed jumpers back to Grangeville resulting in close to 30 jumpers available on the 18th. In the two weeks prior to this, both the Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Lands were extremely busy with multiple IA's and everyone was strapped for resources. Coordinating through Grangeville's new interagency dispatch office, ten jumpers were offered up to the State to patrol existing fires and cover for their IA

resources on the 19th so their firefighters could mitigate work/rest issues. These jumpers were originally sent to Craigmont to standby for Initial Attack but six were dispatched to the Long John Fire immediately on the morning of the 19th, and the other four were dispatched to a new start. In the meantime, a load of jumpers was ordered for the long John Fire and arrived over the fire at approximately the same time as the ground forces.

The long John Fire had been in patrol status, but had slipped off a steep and rocky north face that was heavily timbered and thick with brush. The fire went from 8 to 25 acres and became well established in Capt. John Creek, a tributary of the Snake River. It was burning actively by 0900 with frequent rollouts and some isolated torching. With all the local activity, the state did not have any Type 3 incident commanders available so the jumpers provided a qualified ICT3.

The smokejumpers split the fire with a hotshot crew which had arrived with the ground forces, and both crews began line construction from the bottom up, each taking one flank of the fire.

Containment lines were completed by 1400 and the crews went to work with State and contract resources setting up hoselays and water handling equipment. Two Type II crews had been ordered for the fire but wouldn't be arriving for another day. Plans were made to keep 8 jumpers for another shift including the jumper IC, and two more jumpers who would be utilized as task force leader and strike team leader.

The fire rolled out again during the evening and the following morning jumpers and hotshots again split up and lined the five acre spot. By the time the crews arrived late in the afternoon, the fire was under control. The jumpers were demobbed at the end of shift with the exception of the IC, task force, and strike team leader who stayed with the incident another two days.

McCall Smokejumpers

Eagle Creek Fire- John Carothers, FMO for the Tule River Indian Reservation, had a unique problem with suppressing a fire in a single extremely large, (22 feet dbh, 260 feet tall) 2000 year old sequoıa tree. The fire was burning in a "catface" approximately 200 feet high. John's knowledge of our tree climbing expertise and arborist skills learned through the APHIS Longhorn Beetle Project resulted in his request for Smokejumpers for assistance in this unique fire assignment. Due to the unavailability of Red Carded climbers in Region 5 the order went unfilled for two days before NICC passed the order onto EGBCC and the McCall Smokejumpers. We received the call through Dispatch/Coordination Center and four McCall jumpers arrived in California on July 25th.We met with John, and after a thorough briefing, went to the tree to assess the problem. With binoculars and using various vantage points, we conducted a complete and thorough size-up. We discussed at length the best methods for climbing, identified safety zones (on the ground and in the tree), decided on the proper gear needed for the climb, and developed an overall game plan. We conducted a hazard analysis and how to mitigate risks. Once we established this plan, we decided we could do the job safely.

We secured a climbing rope around a large live branch approximately 50 feet below the fire. This was achieved using a "slingshot" type device and two throw lines connected to each other. This took some time to get the rope set safely and securely anchored. Again we reviewed our plan, contingencies, and each of our designated roles. The next morning we reassessed the fire and inspected our rope and climbing equipment. A jumar (a climbing device used by professional arborists) was used to ascend to the branch. I tied off to the limb with a safety lanyard (standard procedure) and proceeded to use a throw ball to secure another line around another branch further up. I transferred over to this rope and would use this as my working line. I advanced the line to a spot where I could see into the cat face and determine if I could safely work the fire. As it turned out, the fire was just smoldering and it would not jeopardize further operations. I gave Mike Feliciano the ok to ascend the first line. He was then in place to assist me in raising equipment.

With climbers and ground crew in place, we proceeded to haul 200 feet of ¾ inch fire hose up to the "cat-face". As pre-determined, there was more than enough water pressure to thoroughly extinguish the fire with 250 gallons. We monitored the fire for 1 hour and declared the fire out. Mike and I then started down to our main rope, sent down our other ropes and equipment, and rappelled safely to the ground. Our plan went accordingly, and took six hours to complete the assignment.

This was a great opportunity to make use of smokejumper expertise and skills in a safe, professional manner. The tribal members were very pleased with the outcome and expressed their thanks. Given the high value and tradition placed upon these unique trees by the tribe, it was an excellent public relations opportunity for the Forest Service. John also felt it was a wise, economic use of resources, considering the alternative of having to continually monitor the tree and the possibility of a worsening situation later.

North Cascades Smokejumpers

Flick Creek Fire- On July 26th, 2006 an illegal human caused fire began on the North shore of Lake Chelan, originating within the Flick Creek drainage at approximately 1330 hours. Fuels near the origin were a mix of an overstory of Douglas fir and Ponderosa pine, with a sparse understory of shrubs, grasses and some forbs. This fuel type along with record setting temps for July allowed this fire to grow quickly and increase to over 1200 acres by the end of the first burning period. Due to numerous wildfires burning elsewhere in the country, initial attack forces were in limited supply thus thwarting any real I.A. response.

Stehikin is a small isolated community located in the North Cascades National Park at the head of Lake Chelan 55 miles up lake from the town of Chelan. Given the rapid rate of fire spread, the threats to property owners along the lake, and the logistical complexity of delivering support to suppress this fire the park ordered a Type I Team. On September 20 the North Cascades Smokejumpers were ordered for the Flick Creek Fire in order to support burnout and line construction operations for protecting over 100 threatened structures in the Stehekin area. Following the Washington State Governor proclaiming a state of emergency in

Chelan County, and the Sheriffs Department issuing a level 3 (mandatory) evacuation, the smokejumpers were supported with retardent, helicopters, and fireline explosives crews. On September 27 the fire was successfully checked behind control lines which included 4000 feet of explosives, and 3.5 miles of hand constructed line. North Cascades Smokejumpers along with the help of other interagency fire personnel, the Chelan County Sheriffs office, and the Chelan Public Utilities District were able to successfully protect all structures with no losses or injuries, and contain the fire at 7800 acres.

Summary

The National Smokejumper program continues to provide a workforce to support the full range of fire & fuels management needs, as well as a broad range of resource management support for the U.S. Forest Service and other land management agencies. During the 2006 season smokejumpers made a significant contribution by supplying service oriented firefighters capable of addressing the full spectrum of fire response needs. These contributions were documented in the above report.