



## Zion National Park Fire Management



### Volunteer Group Participates in Hazard Fuel Clean-Up

Even though the weather was rainy, it certainly didn't dampen the spirits of a volunteer group (VIPs) that recently helped Zion National Park's Fire Management staff reduce some of the hazardous fuels in the park. This 25-person group waded through wet grass and mud to pick up downed and dead debris that has accumulated over the years and has led to an increased risk from wildland fire. All this hard work was done with a smile on their faces.

The work was accomplished in the Grotto Picnic area of the park, located in Zion Canyon. This area is one of the park's shuttle system stops as well as a trailhead for some of the canyon's popular hikes. It is also the site of the park's original visitor center, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Once cleared of downed debris, the six-acre area can be used as a safety zone for both firefighters and the public in the event of a wildland fire. The park's fire management crews, along with local contract crews, have been working over the past few years to reduce hazardous fuels in the Zion Canyon area in accordance with the park's Fire Management Plan's goal to protect park infrastructures and the public from the risks of wildland fires.

The main goal of this fuel reduction project was to make it easier for the park's maintenance division, with guidance from the fire and resource management staffs, to conduct their third consecutive year of mowing excessive exotic vegetation in the canyon to also reduce the risks from wildland fires. Much of the debris picked up by the VIPs was hidden in the high grass, thus making it difficult for the mowers to see it. They placed the removed debris into piles that will be burned later by the park fire crew under appropriate weather conditions.

This VIP group was in the Zion area because their group representative, Alison McCaffree, had just gotten married in the park and wanted to give something back for the efforts the park staff did to accommodate them. This hardy VIP group of family and friends come from all parts of the country and have been involved before in other volunteer efforts.

This VIP fuel clean-up in Zion National Park is a great example of the public willing to roll up their sleeves and commit to some hard work to help protect some of their lands that they care so much for. Due to this group's (and other VIPs) efforts the park is better able to continue the tradition of perpetuating the natural and cultural resources for which they were established.

