



## Rocky Mountain National Park Fire Management

### Fire Education Corps Helps Spread Timely Message



Team Rocky Mountain conducting evaluation at the Mayor's house.

The Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps arrived in the midst of a record setting fire season in Colorado. The team comprised of six college-aged students from across the country had plenty of work to keep them busy during their 10-week internship. Their assignment was to promote awareness and responsibility and to provide assistance to local communities living in fire prone areas. With plenty of smoke in the air and heavy media focus on fires threatening communities along the front range, creating awareness came easily, but encouraging action sometimes remained a challenge.

Colorado hosted three fire education teams during the summer of 2002, based in Boulder, Colorado Springs and Estes Park. Rocky Mountain National Park was the hosting agency for the Estes Park team, one of six NPS sites to host a team this year. The students were readily welcomed into the communities surrounding the park, including Estes Park, Grand Lake, Allenspark and Glen Haven.

Team members conducted presentations for the town council, volunteer fire departments and homeowner association groups. They conducted home assessments to make recommendations for creating defensible space. The volume of requests noticeably increased after the Big Elk Fire forced the evacuation of several nearby communities in late July. A survey conducted locally to measure the effectiveness of fire education outreach efforts, indicated a 97% satisfaction rate for services provided by the team and 80% of the respondents said they would strongly recommend this program to others. Following the assessment, 61% of residents surveyed learned a new method of creating defensible space, but only 48% said they were more likely to actually create defensible space.

"This is a win-win-win program," according to park coordinator Scott Sticha. "The community gains important knowledge to help minimize their risks and losses from potential wildfire. The students obtain valuable field experience in their chosen career field, while the park increases community and interagency outreach efforts, and at the same time gains a recruitment source for future employment opportunities."



Colorado teams meet with SCA founder Liz Titus-Putnam



Fire Education Corps