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## Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site



### Officials Meet to Discuss Fire Management Issues at Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site

The National Park Service recently hosted a planning session to discuss fire prevention efforts and suppression activities for Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. A Community Assistance Grant was obtained through the National Fire Plan to fund this important meeting. Tribal, neighboring landowners, Kiowa County, state and federal representatives participated.

A visit to the massacre site provided an opportunity for participants to see the fire management challenges faced on both park and tribal lands. Superintendent Alexa Roberts provided a legislative update and current status of fire suppression agreements.

Sand Creek massacre survivor descendant and current Southern Cheyenne Chief Laird Cometsevah, and other tribal representatives discussed the cultural and spiritual significance of the landscape and cottonwood trees along Sand Creek. Discussions focusing on planning initial attack response tactics and implementing fire prevention measures followed. The meeting concluded with a facilitated fire mitigation assessment exercise and further discussion about prairie and riparian ecosystems, as well as range management issues.

Roberts was grateful for receiving the grant funding and thanked the participants for their contributions. "Bringing this group together was extremely important to address the immediate fire management challenges we are facing, and will also help to lay the groundwork for our future management plans. The tribes now have a much better understanding of fire management issues and the fire managers have a greater awareness of the cultural values of this site."

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was authorized on November 7, 2000, with the potential for including up to 12,500 acres of federal, state, private and tribal lands. Currently 920 acres are in NPS ownership and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma own 1,465 acres. The site may be officially established in the next few weeks, prior to Congress adjourning for the November elections.