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Stop Burning Our Heritage!

~ Colville Confederated Tribes
Justus Caudell, Rebecca Peone, and Ike Cawston



2007 Arson Fire Manila Creek 26,000 acres

Randy Harmon of Grants Pass, Oregon was making routine bucket drops on the McGinnis Flats Fire, July 7, 2003. As daylight waned, en route back to the dip site, a catastrophic failure occurred. The Kmax crashed killing Randy – husband, father, son, brother. This fireline death marked the first realization that the Colville Reservation had an arson problem.

Arson is wanton senseless destruction for short-term gain and puts firefighters at unnecessary risk, endangers the public, and destroys resources.

Between 2003 and 2009, arson fires on the Colville Reservation burned over 75,000 acres, costing more than \$25 million in suppression efforts. Timber loss and resource damage were devastating. In 2009, an arson fire forced the midnight evacuation of Tribal elders from the local convalescence center. Fire managers and Tribal leaders had had enough.

A concerted effort was needed and a unique approach was called for. In August 2009, Ike Cawston, Colville Agency Fire Management Officer, and Loren Torgerson, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northeast Regional Manager formed an interagency task force. The agencies included the Bureau of Indian Affairs,



Destruction of our natural resources and our wildlife. This is a bear overtaken by fire.

the Colville Confederated Tribes, the DNR Olympia & Northeast Regions, the U.S. Forest Service, and Colville Tribal Police. The purpose of the task force was to prevent further arson and apprehend those responsible.

The task force was developed from a previously established partnership between the Colville Tribes and the State DNR. An existing cost share agreement for fire suppression was the basis. Cawston and Torgerson recognized the need to maintain a small elite group. The task force needed to maintain confidentiality, minimize costs, interpret fire data and focus on information found during investigations. The Incident Command System (ICS) was used to organize the task force. ICS, once again, proved to be indispensable to agency managers while working through the incident. Impromptu Incident Command posts operated off the Reservation. The positions filled included an IC, a deputy IC, a wildland fire investigative group,



Investigator and Safety personnel hard at work.

a criminal investigative group, and miscellaneous support staff. The IC was responsible for many of the duties typical of an ICT3 - planning and logistics duties.

The primary role of the task force was the investigation of arson fires and monitoring of arson prone areas. In addition, an aggressive prevention campaign was also launched. Awareness was promoted through

passed a resolution to dis-enroll any perpetrator with Tribal membership.

Through their tireless efforts, the task force proved successful.

On Sept. 16, 2009, a series of nine fires were set along a 37 mile stretch of Highway 155 between Nespelem and Omak. During the investigative process, task force members discovered several ignition devices.



Colville Indian Housing Authority receiving an appreciation blanket.

posting of signs, personal contacts, and small meetings.

A reward was also offered. The WeTip program offers up to a \$10,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of arsonists. Individuals providing information are anonymous. The \$10,000 reward is offered on every reservation in Indian Country, but the Colville Tribe and others were so outraged at the destructive behavior more had to be done. The Colville Tribal Council offered up to \$90,000 for the arrest and conviction of those responsible. This was followed by an offer of up to \$50,000 from the Colville Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Agency and up to \$100,000 offered by the BIA National Fire office for the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the arson activity. The Tribal Council also

The same type of ignition devices were discovered at fires lit on September 26 along the Columbia River road, just west of Highway 155. Recovered ignition devices were sent to the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab and DNA was successfully retrieved from two devices.

The DNA matched that of Elam Sonny Ray Baker, a local contract firefighter. He was arrested and charged in May of 2010 on one count of first degree arson and nine counts of second degree arson. In August 2011, Baker was sentenced to a ten year prison term after pleading guilty to one count of first degree arson, two counts of second degree arson, and bail jumping.

Despite the task force's success, this story is far from over. Arson

continues to be a problem throughout Indian Country. Vigilance must be maintained. Public education, qualified investigators, interagency cooperation and patience are a must. As with the Colville arson task force, the result of hard work does not happen overnight. Arson work (training, investigation, follow-up) is tedious, and most often begins with small steps. The first step is for fire

management and law enforcement personnel to know the name of the person(s) working in the fire investigation arena. It took years to develop an arson task force on the Colville Reservation. Their success is the product of quiet, persistent efforts. We CAN put an end to arson!

~ Stop Burning Our Heritage ~



Signs were posted on all Arson Fires.



Administration

BIA ~ NIFC Welcomes Daniel Sine!

~ Daniel Sine, BIA ~ NIFC



Daniel Sine

BIA NIFC welcomes Budget Analyst, Daniel Sine to the BIA-NIFC budget staff in Boise, ID. Sine comes from the Department of Labor where he was an Assistant Economist assigned to the Denver area.

“Daniel has a wealth of experience working for Indian Country and understands BIA’s mission to support Indian self determination.

His background in economics and business will advance BIA’s ability to provide excellent service to the field at large,” said Bob Roberts, BIA-NIFC’s Assistant Fire Director.

As a Budget Analyst for BIA-NIFC, he will be working with the regions to execute funding for the Facilities and Deferred Maintenance, Emergency Suppression, Burned Area Rehabilitation, and the Severity programs.

An enrolled member of the Ho-Chunk Nation in Wisconsin, Daniel has 14 years of Indian Gaming management experience having served as General Manager for four Native American casinos in Wisconsin, Kansas, Oklahoma and Arizona. Prior to working for Indian Gaming, Daniel was a commissioned officer branched with the Field Artillery and Quartermaster Corps in the U.S. Army for five years, and was an enlisted airman with the U.S. Air Force for four years.

Given an appetite for knowledge, Daniel completed four business related Master’s degrees; an MA in Economics from the University of Oklahoma, an MBA in Real Estate and Urban Land Economics, an MS in Marketing, and an MS in Management and Human Resources, all from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Daniel graduated from Brigham Young University with a BA in Economics.

Daniel is proud of his two grown daughters and a son. When he’s not crunching numbers, he finds joy in shooting rifles and muzzle loaders of various calibers and is a Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association buff. Dutch oven cooking is another hobby he looks forward to sharing with the NIFC staff.



Fuels

Locust Fire BAER We Bend - We Don’t Break!

~ Lloyd R. (Randy) Fuller, Ph.D., Inventory Forester and Certified Silviculturist, BIA, Ft. Apache Agency

All fires are dangerous, but when they are literally within yards an entire community, they can be downright scary. Such was the May 6-17, 2011, Locust Fire in Whiteriver, Arizona, on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation.

As important as suppression efforts are to stopping the destruction of resources, structures, and possibly lives, so is the stabilization of the fire site to reduce the possible after-effects of flooding and mud flows. This is the challenging job of the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Program.

The Locust BAER Team began the task of designing a mitigation plan to reduce the possible damages on a fire that was less than 100 yards from homes, on slopes approaching 80 percent, with only two weeks before the historic onset of the Arizona monsoon rains.

What emerged was a very unusual plan to “divert and bounce” the water and mud from K-rails, to sandbags, directing flows across residential streets, under the highway, and ultimately into the North Fork of the White



Aerial view of Locust Fire

~ Photo by Randy Fuller, BIA *All photos by Randy Fuller unless noted.

River. Darryl Martinez, BAER Team Leader, likened the task to the game of Pachinko, a Japanese-style pinball game, where the ball bounces through a series of obstacles.

Hydrological projections predicted up to seven times the normal flow of water from the fire site in the event of a high-intensity-short-duration rain event.

Implementing the plan became a time-compressed public works project that included cleaning drainages of obstructions, replacing culverts, re-engineering smaller drainages for maximum flow, working in and around houses with heavy equipment to install hundreds of 8,000 pound K-rails, placing thousands of sandbags, and communicating the BAER Team's intentions to the public.

The majority of the plan was completed on July 15, 2011, and on July 20, 2011, the plan was tested by a high-intensity, short-duration thunderstorm that dropped 2 inches of rain in 47 minutes.

Developing a BAER plan is conceptual work. Within a few minutes, the abstract became reality, as the July 20th storm delivered a nearly worst-case scenario.



Runoff on Locust Ave.

It was the largest storm the BAER Team had experienced. Here I stood, literally waist-deep in the middle of it, watching to see if we would succeed or fail. The Team's plan and that month's worth of hard work implementing it were put to the ultimate test as a rapid, high volume flow of water, mud, and debris slammed through the treatments.

Few things in life, except for war, challenge you like fire and floods. Yet this is what firefighters and BAER Teams face on a routine basis. In the balance of these decisions, made by seasoned veterans, lie the homes and lives of very real people.

Typically, BAER Teams develop the plan in only 7 days. That's a pretty short time to assess conditions, model potential events, and design the treatments whose success or failure deter-



Flow channeled along sandbags and K-rails



K-rails and sandbags installed to protect homes



Same site - flows diverted between homes

mines whether someone's home floods or stays dry and safe.

The purpose of K-rails is not to stop water but to slow and divert mud and debris. Sandbags are not intended to stop water but to divert the water and buy time (all sandbags leak). Used in combination, they can give you a pretty good chance of minimizing damages. And such was the case on the Locust Fire's rain event on July 20, 2011. The K-rails and sandbags did their job, and the plan did its job. The BAER Team's plan worked and homes were spared.

Did some water and mud get behind the defenses? Yes, it did in a couple of small areas. Still, no homes or property were damaged, and no lives were lost, thus validating the whole intent of the BAER program and activities. Those few instances where water made it past our defenses, but did no real damage, makes this BAER Team's work resoundingly successful.



Major drain under highway



Same drain - flow during storm

What made this challenge a complete success to me was when the people affected by the Locust Fire came up to me afterwards and simply said “thank you.” In turn, I say “thank you” to all the BAER Teams that make this happen every year.



K-Rails and sandbags designed to direct flow



Some flow passed through sandbags
~ Photo by Mr. Gerd VonGlinsky,
White Mountain Apache Tribe Hydrologist

Mentoring in Mississippi: Creating Defensible Space & Leadership Opportunities in the Wildland

~ Laura Atkins, Lead Monitoring Tech.,
BIA, NW Regional Office



Justin Cromwell, igniting fuels during a burn operation.
~ Photo by Laura Atkins

This past March, the Bureau of Indian Affairs in conjunction with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI) Forestry Department successfully put on a fire mentoring detail.

Included in the mentoring group were seven Tribal and BIA fire employees from across the country, with Jack Haggerty, a fully qualified Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2, from the Yakama Fire and Fuels Program serving as the Field Coordinator/Mentor. Craig Cook, Mentoring Program Coordinator, oversees the BIA’s National Prescribed Fire Mentoring Hub located at the Seminole Agency in Florida and any other geographic prescribed fire mentoring hubs, such as the MBCI



Sheila Weatherwax, performing Holding Boss duties
~ Photo by Laura Atkins

hub. Robin Allen, Forestry Director for MBCI, serves as the host unit contact and is actively involved in the mentoring detail. Regarding the benefits of the mentoring detail he states,

“The Mississippi Band of Choctaws hosting of module detailers benefits the tribe in many ways. Prescribed burning through Interagency/Tribal training and certification enhances the ability of all parties to improve their individual knowledge, experience, and skills which can be passed along to others for the furtherance of resource management, protection, safety at home units, and in central Mississippi fuels.”

For the past couple of years, the MBCI fuels program has utilized the mentoring detail to accomplish about half of the prescribed fire acreages burned within the year. Project sites are prepped by the Choctaw fuels crew, with dozer operator’s constructing 50 plus miles of control lines around each unit and structure(s). Unit boundaries are flagged and drop points and staging areas are designated and signed. This is an ongoing process as the crews must also construct new or additional lines as needed throughout the burning activity.

In 2010, the Mississippi mentoring program was able to burn 833 acres. For 2011, the mentoring program



accomplished an impressive 1,025 acres burned, creating defensible space around 96+ houses and other structures. Three Type II Burn Bosses and three Firing Bosses successfully completed all tasks in their taskbook as a direct result of the mentoring detail.

Not only does this detail provide fire personnel with opportunities to accomplish tasks within their taskbook, but they are also exposed to burning within a vegetative environment that probably differs from their home unit. The project units vary in fuel loading as well as vegetation density from impenetrable vine-briar thickets to open pine saw timber stands with light fuel loadings to pine plantations, and pine/hardwood mix with heavy fuel loadings up to 70+ tons per acre and higher. Excessive



Jamie St. Marcks, falling a hazard tree post-burn

~ Photo by Laura Atkins

2008. With a large backlog of burning, a disproportionate amount of hazardous fuel loadings are now within numerous forest units. This provides the Mississippi Choctaw ample opportunity for future training and interagency interaction.

With fuels budgets decreasing across the nation, and fuel loads increasing, a program like this is truly beneficial for employees within the wildland fire community and the tribal lands being treated to be better adapted to wildfire. The valued work accomplished the past couple of details at the Mississippi Choctaw has been recognized throughout the served community, and requests for defensible space treatments around residences are being received at the MBCI Forestry office.

“Thanks to the tribal natural resources director Jason Grisham and all our outstanding employees and the tribe for their positive support of the RXB program to make these programs successful”—Robin Allen



Back row, left to right: Jamie St. Marks, Jack Haggerty, Robin Allen, Simeon Gipson, Greg Tubby, Alvin Williams, Chris Chickaway, Carl Wishork, Laura Atkins, Ricky Orduono, Josh Simmons; Front row, left to right: Justin Cromwell, Sheila Weatherwax, Carleton Goseyun Jr.

~ Photo by Laura Atkins

fuel loadings are due to a combination of no or limited prescribed fire activity, efficient suppression of and reduced wildfires, limited harvesting, and new land acquisitions. Mississippi Choctaw forests are ideally managed with a fire return interval of 3-5 years. However, due to a lack of resources, little burning took place from 2000-



Simeon Gipson leading an After Action Review. ~ Photo by Laura Atkins



Operations

Wise Woman A Female Fire Crew Boss

~ Francis Mitchell, Fire Information Officer,
Alaska Division of Forestry
Southwest Area Office

McGrath Alaska

It was not even summer yet but record high temperatures and strong winds over much of Alaska had dried out tundra and forest, setting the stage for a hot fire season. All that was missing was ignition. Late in May, thunderstorms supplied that ignition with lightning strikes across a swath from the Canadian border southwest to the center of the state. Fires dangerously close to Fairbanks, the state’s second largest city, triggered urgent calls by the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC) for firefighting crews.

On May 31, four crews from Southwest Area villages were called up to be sent to the Hastings Fire, a few miles from Fairbanks. The Crew Boss for the Upper Kalskag Crew is a woman, Katherine Wise. This is the first time in the sixty years of recruitment of firefighters from villages in Southwest Alaska that a crew has been led by a woman. It may be the first time that any Alaska Native village crew has had a female Crew Boss.

Yago Evan, the veteran Upper Kalskag crew boss who chose Katherine to take over the crew and who has been training her for the position, says he chose her because she had proven her leadership abilities as a Squad Boss for ten seasons on the crew.

The Hastings Fire started Katherine’s 23rd season as a wildland firefighter. She has fought fires all over Alaska and in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Asked whether she’d rather fight fires in Alaska or the Lower-48, she laughed and said, “Down there, because there are no mosquitoes.”





Upper Kalskag Crew

A Crew Boss has weighty responsibilities. Besides assuring that every crew member understands and carries out their individual work

assignment on the fire line, the Boss's leadership skills are key to maintaining team morale during long exhausting days. Most important, as a Crew Boss,

she must vigilantly look out for the safety of the other 15 people on her crew, enforcing cautionary rules about maintaining visual and voice contact, making sure they are watching for hazards, that they know emergency escape routes and even that they wear the proper clothing. She is the person who the tactical supervisors go to when managing placement, work shifts and duties of the crew. Katherine said she was a "little nervous - but ready" to take on these responsibilities.

Nine of the 16 Upper Kalskag crew members are women. Asked about their performance, compared to men, Yago Evan responded that is not a question he is often asked but he said the women do the job just as well and then added, with a smile, "They make my job easier because the men work hard to keep up."

Payan For Resource Benefit Southern Ute Agency

~ Rich Gustafson, Fire Management Officer, Southern Ute Agency



Fire behavior on day 1

Weather conditions had moderated fuel conditions below the historic 80th percentile for ERC's and the fire was determined to be a candidate for resource benefit. The fire was located in a drainage bottom with fuels transitioning from Pinyon/Juniper to Ponderosa Pine and mixed conifer fuel types.

Southern Ute Agency (SUA) personnel

From August 5 through August 12 of this year, Southern Ute Agency fire personnel managed the Payan fire for resource benefit. This was the first fire the Agency has managed with other than a full suppression strategy and the information and experience gained from the incident was great.

arrived at the fire at 1500 and assessed that the fire was ½ acre. The Payan Canyon road stopped the uphill movement of the fire resulting in a backing and flanking fire. Line officers and supervisors were contacted and the decision was made to manage the fire for resource benefit.

The Payan fire was first detected on Friday, August 5th by an aerial reconnaissance flight and reported at ¼ acre. Plotting the coordinates placed the new start in the Payan Canyon, an area burned in 1996.

SUA personnel were then left on the fire overnight to monitor the progress of the fire. The fire grew to 1 acre by 1815 with active backing fire through areas of needle cast and isolated torching in the Juniper. Heavy down

and dead fuels burned actively until 2230 and fire behavior died down considerably with relative humidity recovering to 55% that evening.

By the morning of Saturday, August 6, the fire was inactive with the exception of heavy fuels burning in the interior. No flames were visible and we thought that the fire was done. At 1030, the lower right flank of the fire began smoking and by 1245, the fire once again became active.

With the fire alive and well, an organization was built focusing on bringing in people with previous experience in managing fire for resource benefit. The organization included Craig Goodell from the neighboring San Juan National Forest as a Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL) and John Barborinas, BIA NIFC Planner as his trainee. Rich Gustafson, SUA Fire Management Officer was the Incident Commander and the organization began to plan for the upcoming event.

That afternoon, fire behavior increased and the fire spotted across and above the Payan Canyon Road. The decision was made to suppress all fire above the road in order to manage a smaller fire with backing and flanking characteristics. A head fire running up the drainage would present a fire more complex and larger than SUA fire managers wanted. The organization now included the overhead, two SUA

type 6 engines and Matthew Flying as the Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO). An order was placed for a Wildland Fire Management Module, previously known as a Fire Use Module.

By the morning of Sunday, August 7, the fire had grown to 7 acres and had an active perimeter. The fire had backed downhill and the road had to be burned out in order to prevent uphill runs toward the road as a control line. The burnout worked well.

At 1330, fire behavior increased and once again an ember drifted over the road. Temperatures had increased from the past few days and relative humidity was now in the low 20's. A spot fire quickly grew in size to one acre, taxing the resources on scene. With perfect timing, the Unawweep Wildland Fire Module arrived on scene as SUA resources reached the head of the spot fire. The Module hopped in and reinforced the flanks and the spot fire was contained.

The fire was now 22 acres and it was apparent that the current fire behavior was quite different than earlier in the incident. We felt like we had a tiger by the tail. Additional engines and personnel were ordered and while spot weather forecasts suggested a continued drying of the atmosphere and fuels, we now had an organization that had the horse power to keep the fire in check.

The overhead team and the Unawweep Module began formulating options to present to the Line Officer. The Module was comfortable managing the fire along the ridges, allowing the fire to cover large acreages. However, the overriding emphasis of the Agency was to start small and take systematic steps toward an acceptable outcome. We wanted a good first experience and a cut-off area was identified where we could tie the fire into an exposed outcrop and burn out from there.



Fire behavior on day 3

The seven-person Unawweep Module put in an excellent hand line in roughly the same time it would have taken a full 20 person hand crew and the line was burned out to suppress any further spread on the flank. The fire was then in a 60 acre box and stayed there until it slopped over in the bottom of drainage. Another assessment and another control line to identify and burnout created the final Payan fire boundary. The final fire size was 101 acres and the fire effects seen on the fire were different than spring and fall prescribed burn effects particularly in the increased mortality of Gambel oak.

Lessons learned from the incident were many and varied. The take-home lesson was that the pre-planning of a management area is critical. Issues such as: potential fire boundary, seasonality, fuel conditions, suppression opportunities, existing fuels treatments and capabilities of the Agency to support a long term operation, all contribute to an appropriate decision and successful outcome.

The Southern Ute reservation has a checkerboard land status and does not have large tracts of land that allow fire to burn unchecked or that allow for fire to burn for long periods of time. And there are other constraints to consider when allowing fires to burn. Even with the constraints, our experience with the Payan fire reinforced our desire to keep moving forward and allowing fires to play their natural role in the ecosystem. Instead of simply suppressing the Payan fire, we managed the fire and were introduced to the process. We learned that the process requires considerable thought and planning but one that was well worth the effort.

For more information, please contact Rich Gustafson, Fire Management Officer, Southern Ute Agency – (970) 563-4571.



Fire effects were excellent throughout the burn



BIA ~ NIFC Welcomes James Silverstone!



James Silverstone

The new EACC Intelligence Coordinator James Silverstone has been with the Forest Service for seventeen years. He was with the National Park Service for eight years in the field working in recreation,

timber and fire before accepting his first dispatching position at Grand Canyon National Park. Now he is taking his field and interagency experience to the Eastern Area Coordination Center, Milwaukee, WI. His vast experience includes two and a half years at the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) as an Intelligence officer as well as key dispatch positions at several Interagency Centers. James is a welcome addition to the Eastern Area.

James received an Environmental Science degree (B.S.) from the Sierra Nevada College, Incline Village, Nevada in 1981, and started his career in 1987. His experience includes time spent as a seasonal Recreation Technician and a Crew Member on Engine 42 at the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, performing as a seasonal Timber Stand Examiner and firefighter in the Tahoe National Forest, a Biological Science Tech. at the USFS Placerville Nursery on the Eldorado National Forest. He

has also been a seasonal Fire Effects Monitor and Firefighter. James went on to become a full-time Dispatcher (LE, Fire, EMS) at the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

In 1996 James was a Supervisory Dispatcher at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon then in 2000 went to the Eldorado National Forest as a Dispatcher in the Camino Interagency Command Center. In 2004, James worked as an Intelligence Officer at NIFC and became the Assistant Center Manager in the Arkansas -Oklahoma Interagency Coordination Center in 2007.

James enjoys traveling, sea kayaking, motorcycle riding, skiing and trail running. His Red Card Qualifications include the following:

- Supervisory Dispatcher (EDSP)
- Initial Attack Dispatcher (IADP)
- Aircraft Dispatcher (ACDP)
- Support Dispatcher (EDSD)
- Coordinator (CORD-T)

Fire Management Activity at Standing Rock Agency Summer 2011

~ Steven Ipswitch, FMO, Standing Rock Agency

Fire Prevention

Sid Bailey Jr., the Fire Prevention Technician at Standing Rock, has hosted numerous fire prevention events at almost every rodeo, powwow, and school on the reservation. Smokey Bear has made numerous appearances, and he is frequently requested at community events. Billy the Brushwhacker is starting to eat his way through the hazardous fuels and into the hearts of the communities, but he isn't as well known as Smokey (yet). Sid also made an appearance in the 2012 Bureau of Indian Affairs Wildfire Prevention calendar. Lets' see if you can find him! Sydney Paige Bailey went to Pine Ridge Agency for two weeks as a fire prevention



Clay Hagel, Cannonball school students & staff, Smokey, and Sid Bailey, Jr.
~ Photo by Sydney Paige Bailey

technician during a period of high fire danger and occurrence.

Prescribed Fire & Fuels Management

James Condon, Prescribed Fire & Fuels Management Specialist for Standing Rock Agency, and a firefighter there since 1990, promoted into the position of Fire Management Officer for Cherokee Agency in North Carolina. It was a big move, far across the country, and to a place with fuels, weather, and topography that are much different from those at Standing Rock. He takes fire management and GIS skills with him that will be very hard to replace, but we are pleased to see him move up in his



James Condon at his going-away lunch on July 13, 2011. ~ Photo by Steven Ipswitch

career and use those skills for the benefit of another Agency. Meanwhile, the preparedness employees are completing mechanical and prescribed fire projects at each of the communities: Cannonball, Fort Yates,

and Porcupine in North Dakota; and Bear Soldier, Bullhead, Little Eagle, Kenel, and Wakpala, South Dakota. The Agency conducted fiscal year 2011 prescribed burning projects in November 2010, April, May, June, July, and August 2010, and will continue to completion in September 2010.

Fire Suppression

Although fire season at Standing Rock has been at a record low due to weather, fuels management, and fire prevention efforts, the fire season started early in March in the Southwest and Rocky Mountain Geographic Areas, and is still ongoing. Standing Rock Agency sent a Type 21A crew out over ten times so far this year, as well as an engine to New Mexico, an Engine Boss to Wyoming, and firefighters to Montana. The crew went to fires in Wyoming, South Dakota, Colorado, New Mexico,



Mechanical fuel reduction in Cannonball, North Dakota ~Photo by Terry Hodgkiss

and Texas, while three crew members helped fill the Dakota Interagency Crew along with firefighters from North Dakota Forest Service and Three Affiliated Tribes.

Three years of above average rainfall and below average fire occurrence has resulted in the accumulation of large



Sean Whitemountain on the Standing Rock crew in Colorado. ~Photo by Terry Holy Elk Face



Aaron Knudson from North Dakota Forest Service lighting a prescribed fire along the Grand River near Little Eagle, South Dakota. ~ Photo by Steven Ipswitch



Standing Rock crew in New Mexico. ~Photo by Sean Whitemountain



Sean Whitemountain burning piles at Fort Yates, North Dakota in July 2011 ~Photo by Steven Ipswitch

amounts of fine, dead fuel. Even grazing does not reduce this fuel load. These available fuels have driven the fire behavior in the green fuels above them, and although the weather and quick suppression action has kept fires small, there is the potential for large fires with plenty of fine fuel to drive them once the fuels cure in autumn.



Prevention

SCA Supports Tribal Wildland Fire Prevention Efforts

~ Gregory Moon, BIA-FMO, Southern California Agency

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Southern California Agency (SCA) participated in three Tribally initiated community Wildland Fire Prevention events in October 2011.

On Saturday, October 1, 2011, Ms. Maja Pepion, Environmental Compliance Coordinator attended the Pala Band of Mission Indians Fire Department Fire Prevention Fair. The fair included several interactive stations and informational booths where people of all ages were able to participate in Prevention related activities.

On Thursday October 20, 2011, a successful community meeting was hosted by the Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians, with guest speakers Jim Nanamkin, Pacific Regional Fire Prevention Officer and Soledad Holguin, Pacific Regional Prevention Specialist. We -TIP and Take Responsibility campaigns were well received among the Tribe and community. The Fire Prevention group attended the Cahuilla After School Program where they presented a "Decisions Skit." The decisions skit promoted good decision making for young people and demonstrated how individual decisions affect the community.

On Saturday October 29, 2011, Mr. Gregory Moon, Fire Management Officer participated in the Pauma Tribal Fire Department Open House. The SCA fire prevention booth promoted Wildland Fire Prevention



Cahuilla after school program

to all ages; Smokey memorabilia was presented while Mr. Moon met with members on the Community. The estimated 250 attendees were welcomed by Smokey Bear, activities included viewing a simulated vehicle

crash rescue, and touring the Pauma Fire Department.

Mr. Moon, Mr. Robert Eben, the Superintendent for SCA has been extremely supportive of the SCA fire program and its involvement with Tribal fire prevention efforts. With support from NIFC and the Pacific Region, the 2011 completion of the SCA Fire Prevention Plan was a positive step in funding a full time Fire Prevention Specialist. The opportunity for effective Fire Prevention in Southern California is available and with the right person to fill the position, the possibilities are endless.



Pauma Fire Department Southern California Agency Booth



Pala Fire Department interactive booth

are bringing communities together in a proactive and beneficial manner. Tribes are making a difference. Fire Prevention and cooperation with Tribes is an important part of the SCA Fire Program success.”

Moon, who has just completed his first year as SCA Fire Management Officer said, “While working with Southern California Tribes, I’ve discovered a renewed appreciation for the value of Fire Prevention. These types of events

Chumash Fire Department Pays Special Visit to Local School

~ Veronica Sandoval, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians



SANTA YNEZ, CA – November 14, 2011 – The Chumash Fire Department paid a special visit to the Windmill Valley Preschool, an Outdoor Education credited school in Santa Ynez. The visit is part of the school’s fire prevention week designed to teach young students about the dangers of fire.

“Each school year we dedicate an entire week to teaching the kids about fire safety and prevention,” said Gina Ruse, owner and lead teacher at the preschool. “We teach kids the importance of knowing how to dial 911 in an emergency, stop drop and roll, and we schedule our annual fire extinguisher to be serviced during this week so kids become aware of what a valuable tool the fire extinguisher is.”

The hour long presentation was provided by Engineer Gilbert Romero and firefighters Quntan Garcia and Tayler Delgado and included hands-on demonstrations of the Chumash fire engine equipment and age appropriate fire safety lessons.

“We make it a point to emphasize the importance of wearing our safety gear, especially helmets,” said Romero. “We wear our helmets all the time even

when working around the truck. We want the kids to learn that you can be ‘cool’ while being safe.”

Another key presentation piece was when firefighter Delgado suited up in full gear which included respirator mask and helmet. He said, “It’s important for the kids to know what a rescuer may look like when entering a house that’s on fire,” said Romero, “The last thing we want kids to do is run and hide in an emergency. We want the kids to understand that behind the mask is a firefighter that’s there to help them.”

A department of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, the Chumash Fire Department recently received special recognition from the South Pueblo Agency for their prevention programs.

“Our presentations in local schools are just as important as fighting fires,” said Battalion Chief JP Zavalla. “To know that a majority of fires are set by kids playing with matches what we teach in schools is not only fire safety but also fire prevention.”

“We were delighted by the presentation and teachings of the Chumash Fire Department,” said Ruse. “It’s inval-



able to expose kids at this age to fire prevention and the hands-on experience sets the whole tone for learning.”

To inquire about scheduling a school presentation with the Chumash Fire Department call 805-693-0606.



Training

Kalispel Tribe! Successes in Fire Management

~ Bob Gilrein, Fire Management Officer, Kalispell Tribe

The Kalispel Tribe, located near Usk, Washington contracted the Forestry/ Fire programs from the BIA Spokane Agency through the 638 contract process in August, 2008. There have been many growing pains in our Forestry program since that time, but the greatest changes have been felt in the area of Fire Management. Up until that time all of the Fire Management program needs, including suppression,

prevention, and Rx burning were all coordinated through the Spokane Agency Fire Management program. However, great strides have been made by the Kalispel Fire staff within the past year. The following documents have been written and approved during that time:

- Kalispel Forest management Plan and associated EA
- Kalispel Fire Management Plan and associated EA
- NWRO BIA Cooperative Agreement
- Fire Suppression Agreement with the Colville National forest
- Four prescribed burns with associated EA documents

on Tribal lands. To that end, the fire staff hosted a Wildland Fire Guard school for Reservation residents and local staff at its Wellness Center near Usk. Sixteen individuals successfully completed this program. An annual refresher was also held this spring for those previously qualified as wildland firefighters. At this time there are 27 individuals qualified and red carded for Rx burning. This number includes staff from the Kalispel Tribal Fire Department and as well as individuals from the Pend Oreille Public Utility District who attended our Guard School.

A camp crew training was also conducted by the local fire staff in



Guard school cup trench

The fire load is small on the Kalispel Reservation lands but there is a great need for an ongoing Rx program. Consequently, the focus of the Kalispel Forestry/Fire program is to develop a local qualified prescribed burning staff for burning operations

early June. Over 30 individuals are listed as eligible for assignment as camp crew members.

With an enthusiastic qualified local staff and a group of supportive interagency cooperators, we were ready to begin the Rx burning



Guard school field day



Guard school hike

program. However, one major obstacle remained. The Kalispel tribe had no fire cache or equipment to begin operations. A request for start up costs for the fire program was denied by the Regional office as were several requests for equipment funding. It didn't help that this was happening during the current budget shortfall.



Gibraltar Ridge spring 2011

As a former FMO, I decided to ask several Fire staffs within our region for help in this matter. This is when being a part of the fire family really shows. The response was tremendous and, in a way, a little overwhelming. The Kalispel program was given Nomex pants and shirts, helmets, gloves, goggles, fire packs and tools.

I would like to acknowledge Ike Cawston (Colville Agency FMO), Tom Pakootas (Coeur d'Alene FMO), Jim Steele (Flathead Agency FMO), Blaine Keiffer (Spokane Agency FMO), and Trey Leonard (Warm Springs FMO) for their generous and quick response to a Tribal fire program in need.

This intertribal cooperation in Indian country is what makes "fire" so unique and special. With this new equipment and some local fire cooperators, we completed 3 small burn blocks for just over 50 acres earlier this year. I currently have 4 approved burn plans on the shelf covering over 2500 acres. I hope to complete two more burn plans this winter for an additional 500-700 acres and we are just getting started. This year the prescribed burn program, next year the fire suppression program....LET THE FUN BEGIN!

FI-210 Goes to Dine' Bikeyah (Navajoland)

~ Val Christianson, BIA

FI-210 Goes to Dine' Bikeyah (Navajoland) Val Christianson Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Determination, FI-210, was held in Ft. Defiance, Arizona, during the week of May 23-27, 2011. Ft. Defiance is the headquarters for Navajo Region BIA Fire and Forestry Management and also for Navajo Nation (NN) Forestry Department. The Forest Service Program under Nation Forestry (NN-FS) and BIA Fire hosted and supported the course, the first one ever held on the Navajo Nation Reservation (Nation). The lead instructor was Greg Liddicoat, Deputy Nevada State Fire Marshall (R), CFI-IAAI, CFEI, dispatched via the BLM-Carson City District. Greg has been the lead wildland arson investigator (INVF) on two assignments on the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation and so he was no stranger to Indian Country. Before this class, he had been the lead INVF assigned to a number of 'questionable' starts on the Nation up in the Shiprock River drainage and also on Black Mesa, north of Pinyon, Arizona. He was assisted by NN-FS Officers in performing the initial 'snoop dog' origin and cause field investigations. All of the NN-FS Officers had been through FI-210 in 2004 but none had

ever had their taskbook finalized, and hence were still considered INVF-T, or trainees.

Due to insurmountable challenges out of their control, the INVF Trainees were never able to be called off of the Nation to have their taskbooks worked on at other agencies and reservations. When these questionable 'starts' increased up in the Shiprock area of the Four Corners of the Southwest, it was finally decided to call in an outside NWCG 'Carded' INVF staff. Greg Liddicoat was available and reported to the Navajo Region Fire Management Officer, Dale Glenmore, and then teamed up with NN-FS Lead Program Manager, Mike Yazzie and the other INVF-T staff of Ralph Leigh, Roger Peshlakai and Benjamin Yazzie (R). After the end of a two week stint performing origin and cause, these four Officers had become 'Carded' wildfire investigators. After much discussion between the lead INVF and his 'charges', it was determined that an actual FI-210 needed to be held on the Nation, since travel for Nation staff is so challenging. Though the course was advertised throughout the entire Southwest Area, there were only 13 students that signed up and successfully completed it. All



FI-210 students checking burn indicators and charring patterns during field exercise.

students were either from Nation Fish and Wildlife, Nation Department of Resource Enforcement, Nation Animal Control or BIA Fire Management. Mike Yazzie, Ralph Leigh and Roger Peshlakai were the assistants for Greg Liddicoat during the course in and around Ft. Defiance.

The successful partnering with an outside jurisdiction (the Nevada State Fire Marshall's Office) has proven to be a very effective tool for the local Nation law enforcement resources to address the negligent debris burning and intentional sets that are experienced at Navajo. The several departments represented in the training indicates that good advertisement of the class was successful in recruitment. The efforts of lead NN-FS Officer, Michael Yazzie, and lead INVF instructor, Greg Liddicoat, paid off with a very successful class at Navajo.



FI-210 Cadre Michael Yazzie (Navajo Forestry Department), Benjamin Yazzie (Navajo Forestry Department-R), Greg Liddicoat (Lead Instructor, Nevada State Fire Marshall's Office-R), and Roger Peshlakai (Navajo Forestry Department).



FI-210 Navajo



FI-210 Navajo



Navajo Forestry Department Asst. Instructor monitors students marking backing, flanking and advancing burn patterns.



Front row kneeling: l-r, Jimmy Boyd, DRE; Joe Begay, Jr., Animal Control; Tony Williams, BIA Fire; Lawrence Tahy, BIA Fire

Standing l-r: Asst. Instructor Ralph Leigh, NN-FS; Brandon Tsosie, FWCO; Lorenzo Lapahie, DRE; Asst. Instr. Roger Peshlakai, NN-FS; Dorsita Begay, DRE; Craig Tsosie, FWCO; Emilda Lynch, BIA Fire; Fred Davis, DRE; Tytus Sandoval, FWCO; Laverne Juan, DRE; Lead Instr. Greg Liddicoat, Nevada State Fire Marshall Division (R); Dondi Begay, FWCO; Larry Joe, FWCO; Karl Bighair, BIA Fire.

~ Photo by Michael Yazzie, Navajo Forestry Department-Forest Service

Blacksnake's Corner

~ Walt Lara - Yurok Forestry



In Late June 2011, along the Yurok Reservation, a mother California gray whale and her calf entered the Klamath river. For several weeks numerous onlookers, scientists, Oceanic administrators, students and Native people from all over came to see the two travelers. After several weeks the calf returned to the ocean leaving her mother behind. Although the parting was deliberate the deep whistles and calls between them vibrated up the Klamath river and deep into my conscience. Shortly after the mother whale beached herself and died. According to "Indian Country Today" The premier news

linger from Northern California to British Columbia. "Biologists hypothesize that the mother might have brought the yearling into the river to avoid a predator such as a killer whale or a great white shark." There has been a lot of speculation as to why the whales came. For me this is not a new thing, We have had encounters with whales throughout our history. To say it is a good or bad thing is limiting. These are significant encounters that, often times, reveals itself though-out life to an individual or to a people.

I am reminded of a story, I heard when I was young, from poor Frank Douglas,

magazine. "Most gray whales migrate 10,000 miles from the Arctic to Baja California. Every year, a small number of whales don't make the entire trip back and

a Yurok elder, and later found the story in a book called, Yurok Narratives, told by Robert Spott and recorded by A. L. Kroeber. Robert Spott was a wealthy man (Yurok wealth) and shared much information with outsiders like A. L. Kroeber, who often had his own spin on our beliefs, but none the less, I will relay this story the best I can:

"After the water which had covered the world went down, a whale was left stranded in Fish Lake. When she flapped her tail, she splashed mud out because the lake was shallow and she reached nearly across it. Down river on the mountain Oka the inland spirits (humans) heard the flapping and wondered what it was. They had a lake of their own there Oka ok'etul. This is in a prairie hidden by a ring of live oaks. Only doctors, or those who have purified themselves and are in a trance can see it. The youngest brother of the helkau ni'wo there wanted to learn what the flapping noise was because he had heard



something like it coming from the ocean, so he went to Osegen on the coast. This was in the spring month when the whales strike the sea with their tails; and he saw them doing it. Then he knew what the other sound of flapping was, and at last found the whale in Fish Lake.

Before he moved her and while the whale was still in Plu'l, a wealthy family was living at Ko'tep in the house at Pekwoi. The girl of this family had as her lover a poor young man who lived in a tumbled-down house at the edge of the town. When she became pregnant her people found him out. The young man said to them, 'Kill me or take me as a slave.' But her family was too proud to kill him and yet did not want to see him around the house. So he went off and was lost. No one knew what became of him, perhaps he died in the hills. The girl too was put out of the house by her family. She went to live with her lover's mother when she was disowned by her own family, and she bore a boy, and the child grew.

Now, they were giving the Deerskin Dance upriver among the Karuk at Okonile'l on the little peninsula called Omikera (Salmon River) where they dance. All the people of Ko'tep had already gone up to the dance. The girl was down by the river leaching acorns at the mouth of the creek. Then people from down river passed on their way up to the dance. 'Aren't you going upriver to the dance?' they called to her. 'Yes, I shall start soon, to come there for the ending,' she said; but she had not thought of going. So now she took her boy and walked up. When she arrived at the dance place, they had four parties; one was dancing and three others were lined up for their turn. Between them were the onlookers. In front on the right side sat the wealthy men, and on the left the wealthy women, and behind stood the crowd. As she arrived, the women of Okonile'l made a place for her in the front row on account of her family. They did not know of her disgrace. Then she felt sad, got up, went off, and started for home with her boy, crying all the way.

When she came below Red Cap Creek to the bar Atsipu she turned off the river trail so as not to have to see the people of Weitspus, because she was ashamed, and found the trail which cuts across River Mountain (Kewet). All the while the boy kept asking why she cried. It became dark and they made camp for the night. In the morning as they went on they came to Fish Lake and she began to walk around it. But there

was what looked like a great tree that had fallen nearly across the lake. Its surface was cracked like bark. She could hardly see on account of her tears. The boy waded out to the log which was the whale, though he did not know it. So she followed him and they crossed on the log. When they were over, there was a tremendous shake or tremble. They quietly went on over the summit and down again and up the hill from Murek. Soon she recognized where she was and struck the river trail at Himel. From there she reached her home late. She



did not want to start a fire, so she and the boy ate cold food. In the morning when she made her fire the townspeople saw the smoke. Came in and asked her what was wrong, but she said nothing.

Now the only one who recognized her, or spoke to her and the boy was her father's

father, the boy's great-grandfather. The boy saw this old man carving out a wooden trunk. He thought he was making a boat, and he carefully watched him. Then he whittled himself a little one, and after that he hunted birds until he had filled his box with feathers. He showed them to his great-grandfather, who kept them for him. The boy became a skilled hunter of birds, woodpeckers, and fur animals. Over time he grew rich. Finally he had so much treasure that he could at the same time outfit a Deerskin Dance up the river and a Jump dance down the river.

The whale had appeared to the young man in a dream. She said, 'I too am a bastard though I am a girl and you a boy. That is why I was sorry for you and caused you and your mother to come by and pass over me. It is I that has given you this wealth. Keep on doing as you are.' Now when the boy was a man and rich, he went back to live in his ancestral house, at Pekwoi. But his mother continued to live in the ruined house with sky showing through the roof. This was the house of her lover, but after he disappeared she lived there with his mother. Her son asked her to come back to Pekwoi, but she only said, 'someday.' Finally he told her, 'if you really want to stay there, let me buy planks for you for a new house.' Then she said, 'No,' but came back with him where she was born. But she lived only half a year after that. When she said that she was going to die, her son said he would buy her the finest shell dress to wear in her grave. But she took him around the neck and said, 'I want to be buried only in a maple bark skirt like your father's mother, and buried beside her on the outskirts of the graveyard.' So they did as she wanted, except that they buried her in the graveyard at Pekwoi her birthplace." (Yurok Narratives. By Robert Spott and A. L. Kroeber).

There are so many teachings in this narrative, but focused on the substance of an unusual occurrence. The Yurok people and the local tribes have specific places that we pray in ceremony or training grounds. Some of these areas are protected and others need to be. We believe that they are inhabited with spiritual beings that we sometimes encounter and sometimes in the most peculiar way. We believe in the spirits that protect the forests, the rivers, the lakes, scared sites and ceremonial grounds. Like so many spirit beings in our culture, encounters should not be forgotten, explained away scientifically or superstitiously, but be respected as significant to the survival of our way.



Thanks!

Thanks again to those of you who have submitted articles and photographs. Keep up the great work!

Submission Criteria

Please include the author's name, title and location, captions and high resolution photographs attached as separate jpeg files. The article submission deadline for "Smoke Signals" is as follows:

March 1
June 1
September 1
December 1

Please start submitting articles for the next issue of Smoke Signals as soon as you can! Thank you!

"If a man does his best, what else is there?" ~ General George S. Patton (1885-1945)

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- Photo captions
- Names of people in photo and where they work

- Contact name, number, and email address