# Remote Automated Weather Station Networks Aid States and their Partners

## The Challenge

The West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVDOF) has relied solely on the National Weather Service (NWS) for its fire weather information. Although the NWS has provided the WVDOF timely information and is considered a vital player in the wildfire organization, their reporting locations are not close to where most West Virginia's wildfires occur. To improve rural fire protection and the protection of natural resources, local, state and federal fire fighting agencies need current fire weather information from stations which are close to high risk wildland urban interface communities across West Virginia.

## The Solution

A network of 13 Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) has been completed across West Virginia. The WVDOF installed ten of the stations using National Fire Plan (NFP) funds provided by the Northeastern Area (NA). The remaining three are owned by WVDOF partners: the National Park Service; the US Forest Service; and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Weather forecasts from the stations are posted each day on the WVDOF website and all partners use this information to determine staffing levels and fire information. The WVDOF is currently using state funds to complete the data entry of historical fires in order to improve the prediction of fire activity from the RAWS data. This will enable the WVDOF and partners to more accurately determine staffing levels to ultimately reduce the overall size of fires in the state.



The network of Remote Automated Weather Stations is strategically located near high risk wildland urban interface communities. This station is near Lakin, WV. (Photo credit: West Virginia Division of Forestry)

## Resulting Benefits

The cooperating agencies will be able to execute hazard mitigation and prescribed fire projects more safely and effectively because of the availability of current National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) fire weather data. This ability will also reduce the possibility of an escaped fire impacting communities close to hazard reduction projects. The fire danger information is continuously available to the public, local fire departments, industry and news media through the WVDOF web site which increases the awareness of hazardous fuels conditions in the state. By providing this information directly to the public and the media, the second leading cause of wildfire in West Virginia, debris burning, may be reduced.

## Sharing Success

This network of 13 RAWS stations doesn't only benefit West Virginia – it is connected to a national network of stations so that the surrounding states of Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania can obtain accurate and timely fire weather forecasts. A coordinated project such as this has strengthened the partnerships between the federal and state agencies in West Virginia when conducting hazard reduction projects. This project has also provided meaningful information to the public of hazardous fuels conditions and fire danger and is a useful prevention tool to reduce unwanted human-caused fires.

> *The Remote Automated Weather Station network in West Virginia provides accurate and timely fire weather information for local, state and federal partners.*

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Northeastern Area
*State and Private Forestry*

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For more information, contact:

Kathryn P. Maloney, Area Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
Email: kmaloney@fs.fed.us

Billy Terry, Assistant Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4145
Email: bterry@fs.fed.us