



Smoke Signals

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Volume 4

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Fallen Firefighters Honored at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho

~Nat Shaw

A crowd of over 100 people gathered at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho, Wednesday, November 15, for a ceremony honoring wildland firefighters killed in the line of duty. Under a high overcast with the sun peeking through, slowly melting the snow on the ground, the crowd listened to a variety of high ranking speakers.

The ceremony honored the placing of commemorative markers at the Wildland Firefighters Monument. The all encompassing ceremony included recognition of American Indian Heritage Month and the role played by Native Americans in Wildland Firefighting.

Warm Springs Chief Delvis Heath was among the Native people who contributed to the program. Chief Heath spoke of the sacrifices made by the firefighters that were being honored and sang an Honor Song saluting the fallen firefighters.

Tim Murphy, deputy director of the BLM office of fire and aviation was the master of ceremonies. BIA fire director Lyle Carlile, National Park Service fire director, Mike Wallace, U.S. Forest Service assistant fire director, Karyn Wood, Idaho Senator Mike Crapo's staff assistant Sandra Bachman, Vicki Minor, the executive director of the Wildland Firefighter Foundation, Dave Mueller, Wildland Firefighter Task Group, Burk Minor, Wildland Firefighter Foundation and Bodie Shaw, Wildland



Greg Forrest Davis, Eagle High School student and brother of BIA-NIFC's Zoila Forrest Davis dances for the crowd. Photo courtesy Bryan Day, BLM-NIFC

Firefighter Task Group, all spoke paying tribute to the memory of courageous firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty. Vicki Minor, executive director of the Wildland Firefighter Foundation, explained that the monument is a place for "firefighters (and their families) to come and grieve and breathe and remember." The Monument was dedicated in 2000 to establish a place for honoring and remembering all wildland firefighters, past, present and future.



Chief Delvis Heath assisted Bodie Shaw, (Deputy Director of BIA-NIFC) in awarding Vicki Minor, (Executive Director of the Wildland Firefighter Foundation), a Pendleton blanket. Photo courtesy Bryan Day, BLM-NIFC.

As a special tribute to the contributions of Ms. Minor and the Wildland Firefighter Foundation, Chief Heath assisted Bodie Shaw, deputy chief of the BIA NIFC, in awarding Vicki a Pendleton blanket. Vicki Minor's foundation has played an increasingly vital role in assisting the families of fallen firefighters with both financial and spiritual support. Ms. Minor and her family started the foundation a few years after the Storm King fire in Colorado that took the lives of nine Central Oregon firefighters.

Reading prepared remarks from Idaho Senator Mike Crapo, Sandra Bachman said, "Bodie Shaw, deputy chief at the BIA NIFC office, said there were nearly 80,000 Indians enrolled in the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In addition to working on many public land construction programs, the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps helped build up fire protection systems that are still in use today, almost seventy years later. Lookout towers, fire cabins and many miles of phone lines, in and outside of Indian country, all helped fire suppression efforts over the decades."

A large segment of Indians in attendance wore regalia. Many Native employees participated as did the Native American Coalition of Boise (NACOB). The

Umatilla Inter-tribal Drum contributed a powerful performance, singing an honor song as part of the ceremony. BIA Training Officer, Ed Secakuku, a Northern Ute Indian, mesmerized the audience with his hand drum and singing a Northern Ute Flag Song.

Following the speakers and drummers, many in the crowd walked the path around the monument, gazing at the markers of fallen firefighters. Television crews from two Boise television stations and a writer from the Associated Press interviewed many of those on the pathway.

Afterwards, the Native American Coalition of Boise performed a dance exhibition in the Multipurpose Room of the Jack Wilson building behind the tent where the ceremony was held. Other Native Americans joined in the dancing as the celebration continued. Following the dancing, a pot luck luncheon was held, featuring salmon donated by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, deer meat donated by Tim Murphy of the BLM and elk meat via chili stew provided by Dave Koch of the BIA. Chief Delvis Heath said a prayer and the meal began, featuring many dishes cooked by National Interagency Fire Center employees. Wild rice, a multitude of bean dishes, fry bread, a variety of salads and fruit, desserts of all kind, soda pop and coffee all served to make it a delicious and memorable lunch.

When the festivities ended, the sun was shining brightly; the crowd had a warm feeling brought about by celebrating a good cause, meeting old friends, making new ones and enjoying good food. The event organizers felt good because of the outstanding success of the event and what it meant to the firefighting community.

Due to the success of this year's event, preliminary plans are being considered for a ceremony and the placing of markers for twenty-three wildland firefighters next year who died this year in the line of duty.

If you would like to donate to the Wildland Firefighter Foundation to help them continue serving the families of fallen firefighters, call (208) 336-2996. Inexpensive donation packages are available; ask about the Monument Brick program, Honoring the Fallen, or how to become a 52 club member.

The National Interagency Fire Center would like to thank the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs for the Salmon for the feast and also Trey Leonard of Warm Springs Fire Management who donated caps and sweatshirts for the event.



Ed Secakuku, mesmerized the audience with his hand drum as he sang a Northern Ute Flag Song. Photo courtesy Bryan Day, BLM-NIFC.



Program Review at the Great Plains Regional Office

~ Mallory Eils, NIFC



L to R: Front Row: Bob Hurley (Ft. Apache), Scott Bradshaw (NIFC), Tony Recker (Eastern Regional Office), Craig Cook (NIFC), Mallory Eils (NIFC). Back Row: Steve Larabee (NIFC), Maggie Moran (NIFC), Pat McDowell (NIFC), Gene Lonning (NW Region), and Dennis Dupuis (NIFC). Not shown; Tom Corbin (Rocky Mtn. Region).

During the week of November 13-17, 2006 the first ever Regional-level Fire Management Program Review in the BIA took place in Aberdeen, South Dakota at the Great Plains Regional Office. The Bureau has completed many reviews of this kind at the agency level, but until now has never conducted a regional level review. Mr. Bill Benjamin, Great Plains Regional Director, requested the National Office review the effectiveness of the organization and its programs. Dennis Dupuis, NIFC Associate Director - Fuels, was selected as Team Leader with Scott Bradshaw, Associate Director - Planning selected as the deputy. The remainder of the team was comprised of nine subject matter experts at the national, regional, and agency levels from across the country.

In conducting the review, the evaluation team assessed all aspects of the fire management program, including administration, preparedness, hazardous fuels, resource management integration, prevention and education, fire planning, IFPM and staffing, emergency rehabilitation and stabilization, training and qualifications, facilities, and budget and fiscal management. Checklists modified from an interagency template were used to evaluate each program component. The Regional Director asked the Team to address specific concerns involving position recruitment and retention, impact of employee

burnout on health and productivity, and an increase in safety infractions.

The evaluation team discovered that many of the key issues brought to light in the review were not specific to the Great Plains Region. Most of the concerns were national in scope, and many other regions are dealing with the same problem areas. There is no "silver bullet" that will easily fix these problems, but they do remain top priorities at the National Office.

Praise and commendation is in order for both the Great Plains Regional Office and the Evaluation Team for their dedication to this review. The Regional Office should be applauded for their positive attitude and commitment to the evaluation of their program. The fire management staff contributed most of their week to interviews with the Evaluation Team. The time and expertise that each Evaluation Team member contributed throughout the week was also indispensable. The Great Plains program Review provides a model and sets the standard for future regional program reviews in Indian Country.

As a result of the success of the Great Plains review, a Program Review Guide will be finalized and more reviews may be conducted. BIA-NIFC hopes this guide will assist review teams in future.

Retirements!

~ Mallory Eils, NIFC

Two of BIA-NIFC's employees are retiring. Ted Tower, Info Tech Specialist in Boise and Merlin McDonald, Regional Fuels specialist for the Eastern Oklahoma and Southern Plains Regions are both leaving us. Both Ted and Merlin have put in many years of service with the BIA. Congratulations to these two employees on their retirement!

\$29,154,000 Paid to BIA Casuals

~ Debbie Bidaburu and Simi Torres

The Casual Payment Center has processed nearly **7,000 more BIA payments this year** than in 2005. It was a busy year, but it was smooth and successful thanks to the hard work from our CPC staff and the cooperation of the field personnel. We especially appreciate the friendly and helpful approving officials and points of contact that we interacted with to resolve issues.

The Lost Check Lead had another busy season dealing with bad addresses and re-issues. To date, we have **reissued 534 lost checks** with 72 lost checks still pending. We have had several wage and earning statements returned to our office and many of you have received a memo from us **requesting updated information** on a casual's address or social security number. It is very important that we receive updated addresses by the **DECEMBER 1, 2006 deadline** to receive year end W-2s.

We are making an extra effort to ensure that all casual files have current **current W-4s**, address change forms and/or Direct Deposit forms. We need the assistance of the agencies to ensure that the casuals have valid check mailing addresses when completing the necessary forms.

Thanks again from everyone at the Casual Payment Center. If you have any questions, please contact Kristy Valentine, Center Manager or Deborah Bidaburu, Assistant Center Manager at 877-471-2262.



The Zuni SCA Fire Monitoring Team ~ Adventures in Conservation

~ Sara Ehinger, Matt Mueller, Danni Robare, Tracie Sales

We are a group of volunteers with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) working at the BIA Zuni Branch of Forestry who have been living and working in Zuni for six months. All four of us are from different places and backgrounds: Matt is from Illinois and has a degree in Geography; Sara is from Tennessee and has a degree in Mathematics; Danni is from Massachusetts and has degrees in Writing, Publishing and Sustainable Development. Tracie, our project leader, is from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and has degrees in Physics, Business and Environmental Conservation. Despite the diversity of our backgrounds and interests, we have all had important learning experiences during our time in Zuni.

The SCA is a national nonprofit founded in 1957. Every year, nearly 3,000 volunteers work in all fifty states protecting vital habitats, wildlife, and other at-risk resources. These internships are arranged each summer with the Park Service, Forest Service, BIA and other government or non profit agencies. Longer internships require participants to be 18 or older, but the SCA Conservation Crews are groups of high school students who work for about a month on conservation projects around the country. These internships are also affordable; they pay a small living stipend and provide transportation to the work site. Some projects, like ours, also offer an AmeriCorps education grant at the end of service, which can go towards paying student loans or to future tuition bills. The SCA offers a wonderful opportunity to travel, gain new skills and try out your fields of interest.

During our six month project, we have set up fire fuels monitoring plots on the Zuni and Ramah Navajo reservations on behalf of the BIA Branch of Forestry's hazardous fuels reduction program. Fire monitoring is designed to help indicate the wildfire risk of an area, which in turn helps determine what type of treatment is needed to help mitigate the risks. The goal of our monitoring is to help the tribe restore the vegetation of the area to its natural state. We also collect data about live fuel moisture levels. This data helps the Agency monitor the how wet or dry the needles and leaves on the trees are, and if a fire would easily carry through the area.

A regular day as a FIREMON intern involves starting off at 7 AM and sometimes driving one to two hours to our data collection site. Once it's time to get out of the car, we navigate to a predetermined site using a GPS, a computerized navigation unit. This journey can be one of the most exciting parts of the job—our pursuit of plot locations has taken us up steep cliffs, across barbed wire, and through the territory of exotic animals.



Tracie Sales her husband Dan, Matt Mueller, Paley Coonsis, Dowa Yalanne, Darrell Wallace, and Sara Ehinger on top of the sacred mesa on the reservation.

Once we have found our location, we set up a 1/10 acre circular plot and mark its center with a three-foot piece of rebar, which will remain in place for future monitoring. From this center point, we lay out measuring tapes in each of the four cardinal directions. We call these line transects. Next, we go through a series of data collection processes. We start out by summarizing the basic characteristics of the plot. This includes describing the soil, land shape, vegetative cover, geographic features and other basic information. To determine the amount of fuel in the area, we count the sticks, logs and downed woody debris along the East transect.

At this point, it is time to measure trees, quite literally becoming tree-huggers. Each tree on the plot must be accounted for, and low-growing Junipers and dense thickets of Oaks are no exception. We are often given the opportunity to comb our hair "the hippie way" as the dense growth tugs at one's hair, leaving it full of branches and dead leaves.

The final part of our analysis is to list all the vegetative species present on the plot in order to provide a current picture of the area's ecosystem. This data is important because overgrazing, logging, and weed invasion have drastically altered local ecosystems in the last few centuries. As newcomers to the region, we have found species identification challenging, as we are not familiar with the local flora. Despite this, we have all learned a lot through this part of the job. After finishing with the plants, we are ready to pack up and move on to the next adventure.

The data we collect while doing these plots is used by the BIA Branch of Forestry to plan appropriate treatment for areas with a high fire risk. Treatments include mechanical or hand thinning of trees and prescribed burns. In addition to



Matt Mueller and Danni Robare working on the Ramah Navajo reservation doing a remeasurement plot after a prescribed burn.

our “normal” work schedule of doing plots and uploading the data, we also are certified as wildland fire fighters and have participated in several prescribed burns. One of us had the opportunity to go out with a camp crew and learn about the wonderful life at a fire camp.

Additionally, we had an opportunity to serve the environment outside of Zuni when we volunteered for two days at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. Working with the park’s natural resources department, we planted native vegetation on a disturbed area and removed invasive weeds. As a thank you, we were given two amazing ranger-led tours of cliff dwellings in the park. Through these excursions, some of us were able to conquer a fear of heights and claustrophobia as we climbed thirty-foot ladders and crawled through narrow tunnels.

One of the most rewarding things of all was being part of the special community here in Zuni. As a group, we want to give thanks for being welcomed as we have been here. Both on and off the job, we have all made special friendships and connections that should last beyond the completion of our internship. The SCA’s slogan is “changing lives through service to nature”, and we can all agree that our experience here in Zuni has been a life-changing one. Each in our own way, we’ve experienced change in our lives and future aspirations as a result of our experiences this season.

If you’d like more information about joining the SCA, or fire monitoring, you can visit the following websites: www.theSCA.org and www.fire.org (look for FIREMON link).

Prescribed Fire on the Fort Apache Reservation

~ Mary Stuever

Organized prescribed burning on the Fort Apache Reservation dates back to the 1950’s, long before other agencies recognized the importance of the practice. In the past, 50,000 acre annual underburning accomplishments were not uncommon. Now, a new chapter begins in the ongoing story of people, fire and forests. After a two-year “moratorium” on the use of prescribed fire at Ft. Apache, a new program is in place.

The new program is a cooperative effort between the White Mountain Apache Tribe and the BIA Fort Apache Agency Fire Management Program. In accordance with all national standards and qualifications, fire is reclaiming a role as an effective management tool in the forested lands of the White Mountain Apache Tribe.

Projects underway this fall include pile burning to reduce slash (limbs, branches and small boles) resulting from thinning and logging projects. Many high-priority burn areas are in thinning project areas adjacent to homes. These pile burns will complete fuel reduction projects, making homes in the forest safer from the threat of catastrophic fires. Burn objectives and implementation criteria are identified in an approved plan which is closely monitored by the Burn Boss.

By the end of November, the firefighters had safely and effectively burned brush piles on nearly 3,000 acres of the reservation.

(Contact: Mary Stuever, Fire Information Officer, 928-338-5838)



Slash piles from thinning and logging projects.



Piles are ignited opposite of the wind direction to generate less heat.



Flames are six to 10 feet long and burn less than 30 minutes.



Pile consumption is generally more than 90%.

Correction: The “**Project: Rattlesnake Ranch**” article in the September Smoke Signals Vol. 3 Issue was written by **Vernon Stearns**, Spokane Agency. We apologize for this error and wish to thank Mr. Stearns for his valuable article.

“Life’s too short to be nibbled to death by ducks.”

Chris English

Fuels Welcomes Three Fire Management Specialists

~ Mary Tabor



Karrie Stevens and Paul Pooler. Not shown: Jon Martin

The Fuels Program would like to welcome the three inter-regional fire management specialists who recently joined the national fire ecology program: Karrie Stevens (Northwest, Rocky Mountain and Alaska regions), Jon Martin (Southwest, Western and Navajo regions), and Paul Pooler (Midwest and Great Plains regions).

Karrie Stevens comes to us from the US Forest Service where she was a District Fire Management Officer with the Republic Ranger District of the Colville National Forest in northeastern Washington. Karrie began her Forest Service career in 1978 on the Umpqua National Forest near her home town of Glide, Oregon.

During her career with the Forest Service Karrie worked primarily in wildland fire operations and fuels planning and implementation. For the past 8 years she has been a Division/Group Supervisor on a Type 2 Incident Management Team in Washington State; she is currently a Type 2 Safety Officer trainee and qualified as a Type I Burn Boss and Prescribed Fire Manager. She has worked as an engine crew leader, fuels inventory & monitoring crew leader, member of 20-person IA and hotshot crews, fuels specialist, and assistant district fire management officer for fire & fuels. Karrie holds A.S. degrees in Forest Technology, Forest Recreation, and Computer Programming and has completed the National Technical Fire Management program.

Initially, Karrie will be working on LANDFIRE ground-truthing, risk assessment planning and development of monitoring programs. She is looking forward to traveling to each of the Regions and taking a firsthand look at the varying ecosystems and fuels management programs. Karrie works at the Portland office, and can be reached at (503) 231-2115.

Jon Martin reported for duty at the Southwest Regional Office in Albuquerque at the end of August 2006. Jon was previously the Regional Forester and the Regional Natural Resources Specialist at Navajo Region. He is excited about his new position and is looking forward to coordinating and assisting with FIREMON and LANDFIRE activities, improving data storage and analysis, and facilitating training opportunities in all three Regions. Jon just recently completed FOR 437 and 438 (LANDFIRE) training and is hoping to complete his Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO) task book in the near future. Jon is stationed in Albuquerque, and can be contacted at (505) 563-3373.

Paul Pooler has been with BIA since 1991. He was a Range Conservationist at Lower Brule Agency, SD until 2001 and then became the Assistant Regional Fire Management Officer for the Great Plains Region until accepting the position as Fire Ecologist for the Great Plains and Midwest Regions. Paul has a B.S. in Range Management and a M.S. in Plant Science, both from South Dakota State University. He has been active on Pete Blume's Type 2 Incident Management Team for the past two years and is qualified as a Division Supervisor, RXB2 and Fire Investigator.

Paul is looking forward to the challenges of this position especially in tying together the different methods of inventory used by forestry and range people in the BIA. Paul works out of Bemidji, Minnesota, and can be reached at (218) 751-2011, ext. 457.

Two other positions remain to be filled in the fire ecology program. The position for the Southern Plains, Eastern and Eastern Oklahoma regions (stationed in Nashville) has not been filled yet, and a position for the Pacific region will be announced as a restructuring of an unfilled Fuels Specialist position.

Fire Monitoring Program in the Tri-Regional Area

~ Jon Martin, Fire Management Ecosystems Specialist, Southwest, Western and Navajo Regions

FIREMON Assessment

A broad assessment of FIREMON activities indicates that most Agency Fuels Management Programs within the Tri-Regional Area (Southwestern, Western and Navajo) have initiated FIREMON activities within the last three years. The greatest need is for analyzing the data and developing methods for applying this to fuels management planning and assessments of the effectiveness of fuels management treatments at meeting management objectives. Another critical need is the development of site specific FIREMON training for Agency Fuels Management staff. These will be priorities for FY 07. A major hurdle in applying FIREMON is, of course, the lack of high speed internet access at the Agency level.

Student Conservation Association (SCA) Crews

One very effective means of collecting and compiling FIREMON data at several sites has been the use of Student Conservation Association (SCA) Crews made possible by a national level agreement between BIA/NIFC and the SCA. This year, (FY 06) two SCA crews working at Zuni Agency and Southern Ute Agency, made considerable progress in establishing and collecting FIREMON plots and data. Both crews were comprised of a crew leader and three crew members. Based on Agency specific requirements, data was collected at existing CFI plots and fuels treatments plots applying FIREMON protocols.

The Southern Ute Agency SCA crew collected data on a total of 117 plots and the Zuni Agency SCA crew collected data on a total of 93 plots. Data collected included; plot description, fuels transect, tree data, species composition, line intercept and cover frequency. This data is currently being applied to Agency level fuels management planning and to analyze the effectiveness of fuels management treatments conducted this year.

SCA Crews Invaluable

Without the assistance of the SCA Crew, Agency Fuels Management Programs would be hard pressed to complete FIREMON requirements. Hardhats off to the efforts of these crews! In FY 07, SCA crews are scheduled for San Carlos



Southern Ute Agency and Zuni Agency SCA Crews completing Basic Firefighting Training at Zuni Agency.

Agency and Southern Ute Agency based on proposals submitted by these Agencies' Fuels Management Specialists.

Interagency Cooperative Agreement

The Southwest Regional Office Fuels Management Program is currently pursuing a cooperative agreement with the US Forest Service, San Juan National Forest and BLM Field Office located in Durango, Colorado. This cooperative agreement will allow Jicarilla Agency, Southern Ute Agency and Ute Mountain Agency Fuels Management Programs to utilize the FIREMON expertise of the San Juan Nation Forest's Fire Ecologist, Roselyn Wy. Roselyn has been collecting and applying FIREMON methodologies in southern Colorado in a joint effort between the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management for the last three years.

This proposed cooperative agreement will be for a minimum of three years and will address FIREMON priorities as identified by Agency Fuels Management staff. For FY '07 the priorities will be to establish and collect data on FIREMON plots for Ute Mountain Agency and to conduct FIREMON training for staff from Jicarilla and Southern Ute Agencies.

Arson Task Force Successful on Oklahoma BIA Lands

~ Pat McDowell, WUI/Prevention Specialist Eastern Oklahoma and Southern Plains Regions

A severe drought gripped much of Oklahoma in the fall of 2005. This drought continued through the winter, spring and summer of 2006. As is typical of drought in the Southern Plains, this drought was accompanied by extreme wildfire activity. In addition to the loss of timber and hay crops, the wildfires killed livestock, destroyed homes and property and resulted in fatalities. Unfortunately, many of these fires were the work of arsonists.

One area with an unusually high incidence of arson was Caddo and Canadian counties in southwestern Oklahoma. Arson activity in this area persisted throughout the spring and early summer with an average of 10 arson fires involving trust lands being reported each week. While actual damage on trust lands was minimal, the potential for extensive damage or loss of life was very real. Due to this threat, Rod Robertson, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Southwest Oklahoma Zone Fire Coordinator requested an arson task force team be established.

The task force team, consisting of an NWCG certified Wildland Fire Investigator, two trainee fire investigators and a fire prevention technician arrived on July 31. They began their investigations by visiting the scenes of wildfires that had occurred over the previous weekend and meeting with various law enforcement and fire department officials. Contacts were made at rural stores seeking information about

the arson activity. All informants were encouraged to use the WeTIP arson reporting hotline to report any information. The WeTIP program posters and signs were posted at the scenes of fires occurring on trust lands as well as local stores and fire departments. At the same time, the state of Oklahoma implemented a ban on outdoor burning covering the entire state, and coincidentally initiated a separate investigation into arson activity in Canadian county.

The combined effect of all this attention was dramatic. Not only did arson activity nearly cease, but overall wildfire activity in the two counties was dramatically reduced following the arrival of the task force. Only four wildfires were reported in these counties during the two weeks the task force was in place. Two of these were arson, however neither of these impacted trust lands.

Fire danger actually increased throughout the two week time period that the task force was present with daily temperatures reaching 102 to 108, and relative humidity reported in the low 20% range. The Keetch-Byram Drought Index continued to climb each day.

The dramatic reduction in the number of wildfires even though fire danger continued to increase demonstrates the impact an arson task force team can have in arson prone areas. In Oklahoma, where arson is an ongoing problem, the intervention of a task force team reduced the possibility of damage from wildfire to the lives and property of the residents.



Conditions in Oklahoma in the fall of 2005.



BIA Information Technology Update

~ Luther Arizana - NIFC

Re-organization within the BIA has re-aligned information technology resources from field organizations to the Central Office. This re-organization was necessary in order to comply with increasing management accountability directed by the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA), President's Management Agenda, and departmental initiatives for more efficient management. The re-organization has enhanced the Office of the Chief Information Officer's (OCIO) enterprise management capability and has rearranged the business practices and processes that were previously in place between business units and BIA IT support staffs.

The BIA, Branch of Fire Management at NIFC is unique among BIA offices in that it functions exclusively in an interagency environment. Because of the time critical nature of communications and the sheer volume of critical information, computer networks among the interagency partners are the most important of the various means of communications. Networks must be maintained at a high level of reliability.

The interagency environment at NIFC relies on shared IT resources.

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM), being the host agency, provides the cabling and other infrastructure to all the partner agencies including the BIA, Branch of Fire Management.
- National Park Service (NPS) provides servers and network administration to the BIA, Branch of Fire Management.

- Aviation Management Directive (AMD) provides mail servers and administration to the BIA, Branch of Fire Management.

IT services within the networks are shared among the agencies as well.

In addition to the interagency nature of its operations, the BIA, Branch of Fire Management is unique in other ways:

- More than half of its approximately 60 employees are dispersed throughout the United States; many of these employees are co-located in interagency facilities.
- Fire management program operations are year round, typically reaching a peak during the late summer and are extremely time-critical.
- Many BIA, Branch of Fire Management employees, including the OCIO employees based at NIFC, have collateral fire duties (GIS/GPS and computer support) which assign them away from their daily routines to fire suppression or burned area emergency response tasks with interagency partners.

The personnel who provide IT support to BIA NIFC personnel (local and field) and work within the IT interagency environment are:

- Luther Arizana, Supervisory IT Specialist (policy, guidelines, security, pc support, GIS/GPS, etc.)
- Dorothy Miller, IT Specialist (LAN/WAN, pc support/configuration, policy, guidelines, security, etc.)
- David Potter, IT Specialist (Interagency Working Teams, policy, guidelines, security, Shared Application Computer System, e-mail, etc.)
- Ted Tower, IT Specialist (LANDFIRE, NFPORS, pc support, GPS), as of Jan. 1, vacant due to Ted's retirement.



Operations

Western Region Answers the Call to Recruit, Train and Assign New firefighters

~ Wendell Peacock, Public Affairs Specialist - Western Region

On Friday, August 11, in the middle of the 2006 wildland fire season, Western Regional Fire Management Officer (FMO) Leon Ben, Jr. received a challenge from the National Interagency Fire Center. The long and tedious fire season was rapidly exhausting suppression resources -- Andy Bellcourt and Lyle Carlile were having little success finding regions with the time and resources to train new firefighters.

Ben said he'd see what he could do. He knew the Western Region of the Bureau of Indian Affairs had a reputation for getting the job done. Firefighters from this part of the country have long been known for their ability to tackle the toughest tasks.

The regional FMO scheduled a conference call with his agency constituents. The representatives of nine agencies responded

and consensus came quickly -- we can do it.

Later the same day of the national request, Leon Ben called Andy Bellcourt back with the news. Not only was the decision made, the ball was already rolling. San Carlos and Fort Apache agencies agreed to be the training centers. Qualified crew bosses from the Pima, San Carlos, Fort Apache, Western Nevada and Eastern Nevada agencies were committed. Cadre members

signed up from Pima and Southern Paiute. The motto for the project reflected the pride of the participants – **“The BIA’s contribution to the interagency firefighting effort is our Type II crews; it’s expected of us.”**

That weekend, project organizers worked individually to iron out the wrinkles in the endeavor. Who’ll be responsible for drug testing? Pack testing? Soliciting trainees? Providing personal protective equipment? Housing? Training materials? Radios?

When the second conference call convened on Monday, 16 willing callers from agencies in Arizona, Utah and Nevada wanted to be involved. Leon Ben worked with the regional public affairs specialist to prepare and circulate a news release calling for qualified applicants to

submit their nominations immediately.

It was determined that Hopi, Truxton Canon, Southern Paiute and the Navajo Region would send their trainees to Fort Apache. Fort Yuma, Western Nevada, Pima, Uintah and Ouray and Eastern Nevada would train at San Carlos.

Training would start at 0800 on Thursday, August 17, a mere three days away. Rolan Hartzell would be the contact at Fort Apache and Dennis Thompson would take the calls at San Carlos. It was decided to adhere to the Type II crew



Crews loading a bus on their way to the Tripod Complex in Washington. (Photo courtesy of BIA Western Region)

standards of a 60- 40 percent ratio of veterans to rookies.

The project that had every opportunity to fall apart started to fall into place.

Less than a week later, 11 crews, about 200 firefighters, had been trained and placed into the system to relieve forces stretched thin by demands throughout the country. Once again, thanks to the combined dedication of a handful of professionals at the local, regional and national levels, the BIA and tribes had answered the call and exceeded all expectations. After all, **“The BIA’s contribution to the interagency firefighting effort is our Type II crews; it’s expected of us.”**

(Contact: Wendell G. Peacock, Public Affairs Specialist, Western Region, 602-379-6798)



Three crews from San Carlos and two from Fort Apache, all newly trained and qualified, prepare to board plane at Williams-Gateway Airport in Mesa, Arizona in August. (Photo Courtesy of BIA Western Region)



Planning

Winds of the Wild

~ Rich McCrea, NIFC



Of all the weather elements, wind has one of the biggest impacts on fire behavior. Many fire entrappings have occurred, during high wind events. We even have special names, in the firefighting world,

for different types of winds that cause troublesome fire behavior, such as east winds, chinook’s, Santa Ana’s, sundowners, and east canyon winds.

Some wise philosopher said the following: “We cannot direct the wind but we can adjust the sails”.

Indeed we take fire behavior courses and learn how to interpret weather forecasts and make fire behavior predictions, so we will know how and when to adjust our sails. We adjust our strategies and tactics and move

those sails, so we will be successful in conducting our prescribed fire projects and suppressing wildfires.

And speaking of winds; one of the windiest places in North America is on Mount Washington in New Hampshire. On April 12th, 1934 a severe storm hit Mount Washington. The following exert was taken from the Mt. Washington web site.

“As the day wore on, winds grew stronger and stronger. Frequent values of 220 mph were recorded

between Noon and 1:00 pm with occasional gusts of 229 mph. Then, at 1:21 pm on April 12, 1934, the extreme value of 231 mph out of the southeast was recorded. This would be the highest natural surface wind velocity ever officially recorded by means of an anemometer, anywhere in the world."

Now back to winds and weather forecasts. The National Weather Service (NWS) issues a variety of weather forecasts which contain wind information. The two most important ones are the daily fire weather forecasts and spot forecasts. Generally speaking, these forecasts give you a wind direction and wind speed (ridge top), wind gusts and the timing of predicted events. However these forecasts don't account for effects of vegetation and topography, so the firefighter must make wind speed adjustments, when accounting for potential fire behavior.

Because of major influence of wind on fire behavior we need to understand how to obtain weather forecasts and how wind measurements are taken. It's important to understand how our weather stations collect wind data and the correct methods of collecting wind measurements in the field.

The National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) remote automated weather stations (RAWS) measure the wind at 20 foot above ground, and collect the average 10 minute wind speed. In addition NFDRS RAWS collect wind gust information, which is called the peak wind speed, and it's the measure of the highest peak value recorded in the last hour. Generally peak winds are recorded as an instantaneous gust, not an average. Portable RAWS are a very useful tool for project fires and prescribed fires. They collect the same set of data as NFDRS RAWS, with the only difference being the wind speed sensor is mounted at 6 feet, and not 20 feet. NWS weather stations (ASOS) are generally located near airports and the wind sensor is mounted at 30 foot above the ground and they record a 2 minute average wind speed.

There are a wide variety of hand held wind measurement devices, including the wind gauge in the belt weather kit, and most of these work very well. Make sure you maintain your equipment so your weather readings are accurate. With some of these

instruments it is almost impossible to obtain a 10 minute wind average.

The bottom line is you need to monitor your wind speed and direction, especially during critical fire weather events.

General rules and key points on tactics and wind monitoring.

- Obtain and pay attention to weather forecasts.
- Brief fire crews on predicted winds and associated fire behavior.
- Obtain weather observations from observers on the fire and from RAWS units.
- Understand how, when and where wind observations are taken and the limitations of instruments.
- Setup portable RAWS, on your fire or project, in locations exposed to the wind. Use your portable RAWS to their full capability and install a voice over radio transmitter.
- Station a weather observer on a high ridge or peak to monitor winds and weather, and make sure they have radio contact with the fire.
- If there is a staffed lookout tower near your fire that is a major asset. They usually take weather observations and know and understand local wind patterns. Communicate with them.
- Know your local wind patterns and at what time of year they occur.
- A change in wind direction may bring a change in wind speed. A change in wind direction may also bring a change in fire spread direction. Watch out for these situations.
- Watch out for localized high winds in narrow canyons and through saddles in mountain ranges and other areas.
- Watch out for erratic winds where canyons intersect.
- Persistence: Yesterdays wind patterns (gust measurements and 10 minute averages) may carry over into the next day. If the winds were gusty yesterday at 3 pm they may be gusty today at 3 pm (assuming a static weather pattern).

We cannot change the wind but we can change fire suppression tactics and adjust prescribed fire plans, in response to weather forecasts and observations. Adjust your sails carefully and you will meet your objectives and keep your firefighters safe.

News from the Front - Fire Reporting in Eastern Oklahoma

~ Steve Larrabee, NIFC

This past Fiscal Year was a busy one for the wildland fire programs in BIA's Eastern Oklahoma Region. According to the National Climatic Data Center, the Spring of 2005 marked the onset of unusually dry weather in the Southern Plains states that would ultimately result in the driest year ever (in the 111-year database) for the area spanning southwestern Arkansas, northeastern Texas, and southeastern Oklahoma. Indeed, the wildland fire business for the seven BIA and Tribal fire programs in Eastern Oklahoma began picking up steam around the middle of October 2005, with one or two fires per day starting on trust land or near enough to pose a threat unless action was taken by our forces.

The number of fires increased steadily. By the middle of November, the Region was averaging around five fires per day and had a few days with ten or more. All hell broke loose on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, when 24 separate incidents – 17 of which started within a four-hour window – impacted trust lands. There would be no holiday break. In fact, the only respite for the staff was in mandatory days off as the siege continued for another 150 days.

Calendar year 2006 began ominously, with 28 new starts on New Years Day. This unprecedented workload, averaging more than 50 fires per week, carried forward into Spring. Over one three-day period in late March, there were 77 new fires. Things finally began to slow down in mid-April. April 25-26 was notable for what didn't happen – for the first time in six months, the Region had two consecutive days with no new starts.

Over the first half (seven months) of Fiscal Year 2006, Eastern Oklahoma Region incurred 1307 wildfires that required suppression action. To put

this in perspective, consider that this exceeded the total suppression workload for the preceding five full Fiscal Years combined!

While the Region's meager fire staff did a remarkable job keeping up with the most important business – fire suppression activities, they did not have the time or resources to keep up with their fire reporting during the siege. The BIA policy states that fire reports must be completed, meaning entered into the Wildland Fire Management Information (WFMI) System, within 14 calendar days after an incident is declared "out". Other Department of Interior agencies have a similar policy, with a deadline of 10 working days.

These policies stem from a desire for timely reporting so that the workload statistics are made available for monitoring by the higher layers of management. We also assume that fire reports that are completed in the days immediately following an incident will contain better data, since that information is fresh in mind – one's power of recollection fades quickly when there are extended periods of activity due in part to the sheer volume of information, but also to the effects of fatigue. Our 14-day deadline also presumes to help units distribute their reporting burden so that they don't have a large backlog of fire reports to complete at the end of the fire season.

For the big picture, however, we must acknowledge the priority scheme of things. While providing for safety first, protecting lives and property are our highest priorities. As they should, actual firefighting activities trump fire reporting if they're competing for the same time and/or employees. We also know from experience and are bound by agency directives to observe the work-rest ratio and length of assignment guidelines, so there are limits to the amount of time we can dedicate to any tasks, and the lesser priorities get put off for another day.

When extended fire campaigns occur, there simply may not be enough time for the regular fire staff to keep up with fire reporting per the 14-day deadline. Times like this call for additional resources, but the justification is weakened if the fire statistics don't

match what's happening on the ground. Thus lies the paradox where units that don't submit fire reports because they're too busy may not get the additional support they need because no increased workload is documented in WFMI.

The fire managers in Eastern Oklahoma Region and upward recognized the backlog of fire reports that were accumulating during the recent siege. Dick Streeper, the Oklahoma Inter-regional Coordinator, pays particularly close attention to the statistics in WFMI. Noting the absence of fire reports corresponding to on-the-ground activity, he and the Regional Office staff specifically targeted outside resources to help alleviate the problem. For example, they ordered Field Observers through the dispatch system for the sole purpose of researching, locating, and documenting incidents that occurred on or near trust lands, but weren't otherwise accounted for, usually because the BIA and tribal forces were committed elsewhere, so the State or volunteer fire departments independently suppressed the fires.

The fire planning shop, which oversees fire reporting, offered assistance, and three fire planners from BIA-NIFC traveled to Muskogee in late April to help reconcile conflicting reports, account for missing information, and – most importantly – get the reports entered into WFMI. Their assignment was a real eye-opener and provided much-needed perspective regarding the challenges faced by field-level programs. Key observations included the following:

- Most incidents were initially documented in the FireCode system, but not on the DI-1202-BIA Individual Fire Report form that is required for WFMI. Because a FireCode is needed to expend emergency funds, reporting in the FireCode system is a very high priority. Unfortunately, the incident information required for FireCode is relatively minimal in comparison to the DI-1202. Even though the dispatchers in Hot Springs included other key data in the FireCode comments field, it was generally insufficient to complete a fire report.
- Communication difficulties hindered

the fire reporting process. Whereas other areas have radio coverage, allowing the Incident Commander to relay information verbally to Dispatch, there is no radio link between the field-level units in Oklahoma and their dispatch center in Hot Springs. As with any rural area, cell phone coverage is erratic, leaving the IC's written field notes as the primary source for information. As can be expected, the IC's don't place a high priority on filling out forms or writing extensive narratives when managing a busy fire scene, so their field notes – if any exist at all – are usually cryptic and incomplete.

- The BIA offices lacked the connectivity needed to access WFMI because it is an Internet-based system. With only three fire laptops (computers that are authorized to connect to the Internet) in the entire Region, there were long delays before hard-copy fire reports could be entered. In addition to the backlog this created, many of the hard-copy fire reports were lost or duplicated while awaiting data entry.

Based on the lessons learned in Oklahoma, recommendations to ensure timely, complete, and accurate fire reporting include:

- It is important to keep the fire reports in perspective. They are important. A signed, hardcopy DI-1202-BIA form (or signed print-out from WFMI) is a legal document, serving as the official record of an incident and the actions taken. The statistics derived from WFMI provide the basis for funding and resource allocation decisions that are tied to workload.
- As Dick Streeper says, "a fire is not over until the fire report is done". Provided that they don't violate the work/rest guidelines, IC's need to set aside some time at the end of shift to (minimally) complete hard-copy fire reports for that day's incidents. Of course, there will be some days when this isn't practical, but we need to be wary when the reporting burden is continually deferred.
- Just as we call for additional firefighting resources when our initial attack forces are overwhelmed, we may sometimes need outside help to keep up with the paperwork. Units can use AD

employees to offset the additional clerical and administrative workload specifically arising from emergency incidents. The Regional Office or even BIA-NIFC staff may provide some relief for entering data into WFMI, especially since they have access the Internet. Field Observers can be ordered through the dispatch channels and tasked specifically with collecting and documenting data for fire reports.

- The IC must ensure sufficient data is collected to complete the fire report. Even if the initial information is passed verbally to the dispatch staff, it is desirable for the IC to capture all pertinent information in field notes. Especially since the Thirtymile incident, IC's are expected to use size-up checklists and other forms to document their assessment of the incident and subsequent decisions. Searching

the Internet for the phrase "incident organizer" will yield links to forms that have been developed for this purpose; however, they may need to be modified to accommodate key DI-1202-BIA fields and other agency-specific data. The Operational Briefing Checklist in Appendix 12-1 of the Blue Book is another resource to consider. The key is to design a concise and convenient form for the IC's to use on every incident to systematically capture the minimum data necessary.

- Units should notify their Regional Office whenever a significant backlog of fire reports develops. Fire activity is monitored by the higher levels of management via WFMI, but it takes a perceptive manager to notice what's not there. Resource and funding decisions are based, in large part, on statistical data, and WFMI is the official

system from which such data is derived. There is some truth to the statement "if it's not in WFMI, it didn't happen".

Fire reporting allows us to document our workload, but it contributes to our workload too. During especially busy periods, it is understandable if some fire reports cannot be completed immediately following the incident, but we should not let a large backlog develop. From the unprecedented fire activity in Eastern Oklahoma Region, we have identified ways to reduce the overall burden of fire reporting and recognized that there are times when outside resources may be needed to help complete this important task.

"Climate of 2005, Annual Review, U.S. Drought - National Climatic Data Center, 13 January 2006" (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/research/2005/ann/drought-summary.html>)



Prevention

Fire Prevention at the Fort Apache Agency

~ Marco Minjarez, Fire Prevention Tech.



"All right! Another fire call!" Where was I going next? California brush country? Florida Everglades? Alaska? When I saw that smoke, I saw dollar signs. As a member of the hotshot crew, I loved to set backfires and work those burnout operations. But it's a totally different story when your own backyard is burning.

The Rodeo-Chediski was a wake-up call. We were assigned to the Heber fire camp, but arrived after the fire had done its worst damage – it was sad to see those beautiful homes destroyed.

Next, the Fort Apache Hotshots were assigned to help our former crew boss Rick Lupe south of Show Low. We utilized areas that we had thinned and prescribed burned to make a stand against just such a fire. We had to burn out areas

where I had hunted deer, elk and other game, areas that I had fished.

But the backburn worked. For the first time in days, the fire area didn't look like the aftermath of a nuclear incident. I climbed up the Limestone lookout tower and looked out over what was left of the west side of the reservation. For miles to the south, east and west, the forest looked like so many burnt matchsticks. I was angry.

On the drive home, I could see where we had thinned and where we had prescribe burned the years previous and noticed that these areas hadn't sustained much damage. "More prescribed fires mean fewer wildfires."

Two years (and 20 pounds) later, I started getting interested in fire investigations and fire prevention. I always thought fire prevention meant walking Smokey Bear and handing out goodies. I realized that public education through schools,

newspapers, special events, radio shows and sign programs really did make a difference.

The number of human-caused fires started going down and fewer acres were being burned. "The best way to fight fires is to prevent them."

The Rodeo Fire was started by someone who had earlier tried to ignite the same area. I remember following a bike trail and seeing footprints in the area of the fire's origin. I attended the FI-210 fire investigation course, taught by some of the best fire investigators around. During that class, I realized that after all the years of mopping up (and destroying evidence), a cautious observer can usually find the point of origin by looking at the burn pattern, indicators, angle of char and other fire behavior patterns. Using these factors could lead to a conviction before more damage is done.

Earlier this year, I received a call about a young boy starting a fire near his grandparents' home. His grandmother said she didn't want him in trouble; she just wanted to "scare him." When I knocked on his front door, he ran out

the back door. Later we had him help staff our fire prevention booth near his community. It turned out that simply hearing us tell other kids not to play with matches and helping us hand out brochures was far more effective than punishing him. "Public education and awareness is the key."

Native Americans have always used fire as a tool. I have read stories of using fire for hunting, warfare and improving the land. Comparing old photographs of the White Mountains to today's forest shows graphically how overcrowded it has become. The potential exists for a great deal more damage than ever before.

What's changed? We've changed. For many years, Mother Nature was allowed to do her own thing. By putting out summer fires started by lightning, we interfered with the natural role of fire, thereby creating overgrown forests. This situation leads to the possible danger of burning down homes and injuring or killing not only wildlife but also people. This is a fact with which we must live.

This is not our first Rodeo-Chediski, nor will it be our last. We need to continue carefully logging, thinning and burning to return the forest to what it's supposed to be. We've placed ourselves in a very bad situation. "The only way to preserve nature is to manage it."

I want to offer my fellow firefighters sincere thanks for my fond memories of life on the line. I miss you guys. Be safe out there. If you have fire prevention staff, provide support and help whenever you can. Fire prevention is long overdue in Indian Country. The only fire prevention education I received as a child was a resounding whack on the head from my grandmother. She'd say "Don't play with matches," adding the ominous "Or I'll kill you." I never believed she'd really do it, but I didn't take the chance. "Remember, only you can prevent wildfires."

Spokane's Arson Fires Reduced

~ Jeffrey Moyer, Prevention Officer

The Fire Prevention Program is new to Spokane Indian Reservation. In the spring of 2005 the Wildland Fire Prevention Plan was approved by BIA-NIFC. Since then we have installed 6

fire danger signs at each the entrances on to the Spokane Reservation and two signs inside the main communities on the Reservation. This is the first time in along time that fire management program has been able to communicate the fire danger to the public thought its signs. By putting these sign we where hoping that the community will take pride in them and keep a watchful eye on them. The ultimate goal is too be able to educate and make the public more aware of what is going on around them. We have also cut down on the arson fires since the prevention program has been implemented thanks to education and the WeTiP campaign.

The fire danger signs will be adjusted by what the ERC and the Burning index are, for the given week.

We have also used Smokey the bear as a key component to help get the fire prevention message out. We use Smokey at the annual Labor Day Pow Wow, school visits, fourth of July weekend on the Spokane and Kalispel Reservation, and numerous special events like the local health fair. We also, use the children as a big resource to help with fire education at there home they are able to educate there parents a lot better then will could every imagine.

Andy Lujan Receives Smokey Bear Award

~ Mallory Eils

Mr. Andy Lujan, retired Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northern Pueblos Agency employee was awarded the Bronze National Smokey Bear Award on November 9, 2006 for his outstanding accomplishments and contributions to wildland fire prevention. Andy dedicated 30 plus years of his career to fire prevention, outreach, and education in the eight Northern Pueblos. He never missed an opportunity to share the fire prevention message with the students and members of the community.



Mr. Cameron Martinez, Superintendent, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northern Pueblos Agency presenting the National Smokey Bear Award to Mr. Lujan.

Training

Human Resource Specialist Position (HRSP) Opportunities

Training Opportunities 2007

In the Incident Command System, the HRSP role includes:

- Point of contact for Incident personnel to discuss Human Resource and Civil Rights concerns
- Inform Incident Management Team (IMT) of concerns and possible inappropriate practices
- Participate in daily briefings and planning meetings to provide appropriate Human Resource or Civil Rights information
- Advise IMT of proper actions to alleviate inappropriate practices
- Assist IMT in resolution of inappropriate acts or conditions at the lowest impacted level, or provide referral information to the Home Unit for unresolved issues.

~ Jan Everett, USFS HRSP Program Manager

- Provide Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) support to include peer support, defusing (informal, initial debriefing), and liaison between CISM and IMT.

Selections for Trainees for the HRSP course (S340) are based on Prerequisite skills:

- Skill in effective communications, ability to make presentations to large groups, and ability to provide advice to management on complex issues.
- Writing skills to document issues and actions taken
- Interpersonal skills to interact with diverse individuals and sensitive issues
- Ability to gather and analyze facts, then develop logical recommendations (Training schedule next page)

**Training opportunities for 2007 Full HRSP Course (S340)**

Date	Location	Contact
March 26 – 30	Albuquerque, NM	Ana Parada, 505-842-3452 Jan Everett, 406-329-4938
Refresher (for qualified or trainee HRSPs only)		
February 6-7	Salt Lake City, UT	Sherry Neal, 801-625-5806
April 17-19	Missoula, MT	Jan Everett, 406-329-4938 Dale Tribby, 406-233-2812
April (TBD)	Vancouver, WA	Jacquelyn Oakes, 503-630-8815

Please share this information with employees you believe have the skill, interest, and availability to perform this role on emergency incidents.



Right: Todd Soukala, Fond du Lac
cleaning up a face cut.

Yakama Tribe Hosts C-Faller Training

~ Dave Koch, NIFC

The Yakama Tribe recently hosted a C-Faller chain saw training course October 10-12, 2006 near Glenwood, Washington. This heavily forested area located on the east slope of the Cascades near beautiful Mt. Adams is the perfect location for the course. Snags (dead trees) are abundant in the area and provide firefighters the opportunity to practice and test their skills on large diameter, high complexity trees in a safe, instructional environment.

This course, conducted only once or twice a year, supports the BIA's chain saw training and certification program. Felling snags and other large trees on and off the fireline is an occupation

with a great deal of risk. Students attending these classes learn the techniques to fell these trees safely and accurately, every time. Participating in learning opportunities such as these prior to entering the hazardous fire environment are priceless.

The BIA C-Faller Program is managed by Leo LaPaz, Superintendent of the Navajo Interagency Hotshot Crew. Earl Old Chief, Superintendent of the Bear Paw IHC, assisted Leo in conducting the Yakama training. There are currently only seven C-Faller Certifiers recognized by the BIA. Leo and Earl are both certified at this level.



Ron LaForge, Crow Agency working up a face cut.



2006 Yakama C-Faller Students

Without the generous support of Tribal timber programs, this type of training would not be possible for our Native American firefighters. We would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Yakama Tribe for hosting last year's C-Faller course.

If you have any questions regarding this course or the Bureau's chain saw certification requirements, please contact Leo at (928) 729-7391.

2006 Fire Season Trainees Work on Position Task Books

~ Ed Secakuku, NIFC Training Specialist



Trainees complete forms in fire camp.

The 2006 Fire Season was a very busy one for fire resources throughout Indian Country.

Firefighters across Indian Country utilized the busy 2006 fire season to work on or complete their Position Task Books in order to be considered for position certification.

As an Incident Training Specialist (TNSP) on assignments throughout the west this past 2006 fire season, I was pleased to see the number of our Tribal and BIA fire personnel working on Position Task Books. Trainee assignments ranged from Fire Fighter Type 1 (FFT1) to Operation Section Chief (OSC).

I want to congratulate those trainees who completed their Position Task Book(s) and who were recommended for certification.

Trainee dedication with the support of the home agency is the key to see that Tribal and BIA personnel continue to move forward and upward in the fire organization.

Completing the Position Task Book is a very important step in our performance-based system. It is a required evaluation instrument which documents whether or not the trainee is capable of performing a wide array of position-specific tasks. The initiation, evaluation, and completion of task books are data requirements in the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS).

Agency Line Officers, Forest Managers, Fire Management Officers and Training Officers have a responsibility to support the development of our workforce.

If you have any questions regarding the Position Task Book and how to complete one, refer to the National Interagency Incident Management System - Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide 310-1.

Minimum Qualification Requirements for Firefighters (IFPM)

~ Dave Koch, NIFC



Implementation of the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualification Standards (IFPM)

is now in full swing. The IFPM Standards are essentially minimum qualification standards for 14 positions determined to be key in the management of a fire program. The positions range from the Senior Firefighter swinging the pulaski or dragging the hose on the fireline to the National Fire Director. The IFPM was implemented partly as a result of the findings of the team that investigated the South Canyon Fire where 14 firefighters lost their lives in 1994.

Implementation of IFPM began on October 1, 2004. The Department of Interior provided the agencies with a 5 year "Implementation Period" starting on this date whereby employees have until October 1, 2009 to meet the minimum qualification standards for their positions. IFPM requirements apply to both Bureau and Tribal fire employees.

The Implementation process is fairly simple. Employees who occupy one of the 14 key fire positions are required to complete incumbent declaration forms and submit them to their Servicing Personnel Office. Staffing specialists at these offices complete evaluations of the employee's education, specialized experience, qualifications, and training and determine whether or not the employee meets the IFPM standard.

The employee is then notified by HR on the determination.

Most fire employees already meet the IFPM standard: those that do not have until October 1, 2009. It is important that supervisors and employees work together in formulating Individual Development Plans that address how the employee will meet the standard within the remaining time frame.

IFPM is an important workforce development initiative that will have long-lasting implications on the professionalism and success of our fire management organization. With it we raise the bar, ensuring that employees we hire enter a key fire management position with a minimum set of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The implementation effort has been very successful thus far as a result of the teamwork between Line Officers, Fire Management Staff, and Human Resources Specialists. BIA Human Resource Management personnel in Anadarko, Billings, Albuquerque, Phoenix and Gallup are recognized for their commitment to this workforce development initiative.

*"I read it for the articles
Dawg!"*

Mike Amicarella

From the Director's Corner

~ Lyle Carlile

As we start the New Year I feel it is appropriate to look back at 2006. Calendar year 2006 was extremely challenging for the Indian Country Wildland Fire Program. At this time last year we were extremely busy with fires in Oklahoma. This effort was supported by many throughout Indian Country as well as several of our Federal and State Cooperators. The western fire season was very demanding for all wildland fire agencies. All together a record number of acres were burned in 2006 and suppression costs far exceeded \$1 billion. Throughout all of this, our Indian Country firefighters responded effectively and safely.

In spite of these challenges there are several examples that demonstrate our positive response. The 2006 *Federal Fire and Aviation Operations Action Plan* contained direction to utilize Type 3 Organizations when appropriate to help reduce suppression costs. Several locations within Indian Country responded

to this direction and utilized local Type 3 Organizations to manage incidents instead of ordering a Type 2, Incident Management Team. The Western Region also responded to a shortage in T2 crews by training additional firefighters in the middle of the fire season. Throughout Indian Country a strong and successful initial attack effort continued throughout the year. These are but a few examples of the great effort that was displayed.

As we start 2007 we can be sure that we will continue to face challenges. However, a quick review of the 2006 challenges, our subsequent response, and accomplishments clearly demonstrates that the Indian Country Wildland Fire Program is able to respond. Indian Country will continue to adapt to the challenges that are faced and maintain a strong preparedness, fuels and prevention program. My thanks go out to all of you for your efforts in 2006.

From the Publishers

~ Dave Koch and Laurel Simos
Editorials?

Thanks!

Thanks again to those of you who have submitted articles and photographs. Wow! We've had such excellent response we have a couple of articles to publish at a later date! Thanks to our readers as well!

The article submission deadline for "Smoke Signals" is as follows:

March 1
June 1
September 1
December 1

We've been considering publishing an editorial section of Smoke Signals. We'd like to know what you think of the idea. Please call, e-mail or fax us with your thoughts on the subject.

We're proud to publish your accomplishments, and keep up the great work!

If you've submitted an article and don't see it right away, look for it in the next issue.

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Submission Criteria

When submitting articles, please include the author's name. Photographs should be taken at the highest resolution possible and submitted in a jpeg format as a separate file rather than "placed" in an MS Word document. We're happy to edit your submissions for you!

Distribution

Please route this publication to your staff. If you need additional copies for your staff, or need copies sent to another address please contact us. Please make sure your seasonal fire employees have an opportunity to read Smoke Signals!