



# Smoke Signals

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Volume 5

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## 2006 Ashley Lakes WFU Fire

~Tony Harwood, Fire Program Manager  
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Ronan MT



**Ashley Lakes Fire: looking southeast from the Mission Valley on September 13th.**

The Ashley Lakes Fire started in the Confederated Salish and Kootenai (CSKT) Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness (MMTW) on August 8, 2006. This lightning-caused fire occurred at the 7,000' elevation level in rugged terrain and initially burned about one acre of mixed lodge-pole pine and sub-alpine fir vegetation. The fire was one of 11 lightning-cause fires that occurred that day on the Flathead Indian Reservation under 90<sup>th</sup> percentile fire indices conditions.

Initial assessment of the fire situation presented tribal resource managers with many difficult decisions. The fire was located in extremely steep, rocky terrain. Helispot opportunities were non-existent and the topography was too extreme for assignment of hand-crews and smokejumpers. Also, the wilderness fire was located in the McDonald Peak Grizzly Bear Conservation Area adjacent to private land holding and residences in the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Area.

Even though the fire was within the Tribal Wilderness it could be easily seen by valley residents. It started about two miles upslope from homes and within 5 air-miles northeast of the reservation community of St. Ignatius. The smoke and flames were in clear view of a local population of over 10,000 people as well as drivers on the heavily traveled US Highway 93.



**Ashley Lakes Fire: A night image looking northeast into the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness area on September 5th. This image courtesy of AP.**

A Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) was developed and approved on August 9 that selected a management response of monitor and confine. The monitor and confine action was deemed the best alternative for the protection of tribal wildlife and cultural resources and to ensure public and firefighter safety.

The fire was monitored on a daily basis until August 22 when significant fire behavior occurred and the fire grew to about 125 acres in size. Over the next two-week period the fire actively spread on steep slopes, in very dry vegetation, and under warm daytime and persistent night-time thermal-belt weather conditions. Favorable rainfall helped provide full confinement of the fire on September 16 and the fire was declared out on December 1 with a final fire size of 3,047 acres. The fire suppression cost was about \$ 380,000.

Under national and regional preparedness levels 4 and 5 conditions, there was heavy competition for fire suppression resources. Flathead Agency was unable to fill resource orders for Type 1 hand-crews and aircraft. A fire use team was ordered on September 8, but the IMT was re-

assigned to a higher priority fire while en-route to Ronan.

The fire was eventually managed by a local Type 3 management organization with total staffing of about ninety (90) tribal, BIA, contractor, and local government firefighters. The agency conducted long-term risk assessments with the assistance of a Bureau of Indian Affairs Long-term Analyst (LTAN) from the Southwest Region. Suppression forces successfully engaged the fire with burnout and direct suppression actions over about 2 miles of established confinement line (on the southwest corner of the fire) on September 12 and 13. Timely aircraft support was provided by the neighboring Lolo National Forest. Subsequent fire spread was limited to upslope runs back into the wilderness area until the fire was fully contained in late-September.

Tribal Forestry, Natural Resources, Disaster and Emergency Services, Fish & Game, and Law Enforcement Departments provided great assistance with land management and cultural resource protection actions and also worked in strong cooperation with the Lake County Sheriff's Office, Office

of Emergency Services, and local volunteer fire departments to provide fire evacuation planning, population protection, and public information/community meeting efforts.

The Ashley Lakes fire suppression and support efforts were managed by a local organization with few resources, in very hazardous terrain, and under constant public scrutiny. Key firefighter positions were filled by local inter-agency staff and retirees. Local logging contractors and volunteer fire departments provided all water handling and heavy equipment resources and zone aircraft resources were shared day-to-day. The cooperative efforts provided a valuable opportunity for the Tribes to work successfully with local fire management partners in the management of a very complex situation.

The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness (MMTW) is a tribally designated wilderness area established in 1981. The 92,000 acre wilderness is located in the east-central portion of the Flathead Indian Reservation and is bordered by the South Fork Jocko Primitive Area to the south and the Wilderness Buffer Zone Management Area to the west. A MMTW Fire Management Plan was implemented in 1985 and several small fires were managed for resource benefit during the 1989 and 1991 fire seasons. Flathead Agency returned to a full suppression policy in 1992 due to changes in national fire policy and has been under a full-suppression policy until recently. A new CSKT Fire Management Plan is presently being approved. Management of resource benefit fires will be allowed within the MMTW starting in the 2007 fire season.

The Mission Mountains experienced a very active fire occurrence history in the mid to late-1890's and the early 1900's. Pattern's of large fires on the Mission Mountain landscape is very evident in old photographs of the area. But, fire suppression efforts were very



successful in recent decades. The management area has only averaged about two fire starts per year since 1980. Most fires were natural out or were successfully suppressed. The 450 acre Mollman Fire (the largest MMTW fire since the 1950's) was successfully managed under a monitor and confine strategy during the 2003 fire season.

The Tribes are presently considering use of prescribed fire in the MMTW and the expansion of wildland fire use for resource benefit into the South Fork Jocko Primitive Area, designated

roadless areas, and possibly on Flathead River islands. The Tribe is also conducting interagency planning efforts to provide opportunities for fire use management in a complex of interconnected Tribal and United States Forest Service management areas to include the MMTW, The South Fork Primitive Area, the Flathead National Forest Mission Mountain Wilderness, and the Lolo National Forest Rattlesnake Wilderness. Co-management of resource benefit fires, across jurisdictional boundaries, may be a strong possibility in the near future.

Even though public concerns were high; the Ashley Lakes Fire was managed with the full support of the local communities, tribal membership, and the Tribal Council. Very beneficial fire was realized within the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness. Acceptance of the Ashley Lakes Fire and the Tribes desire for wildland fire use benefits can be attributed to strong fire education and information program efforts over the last several years.



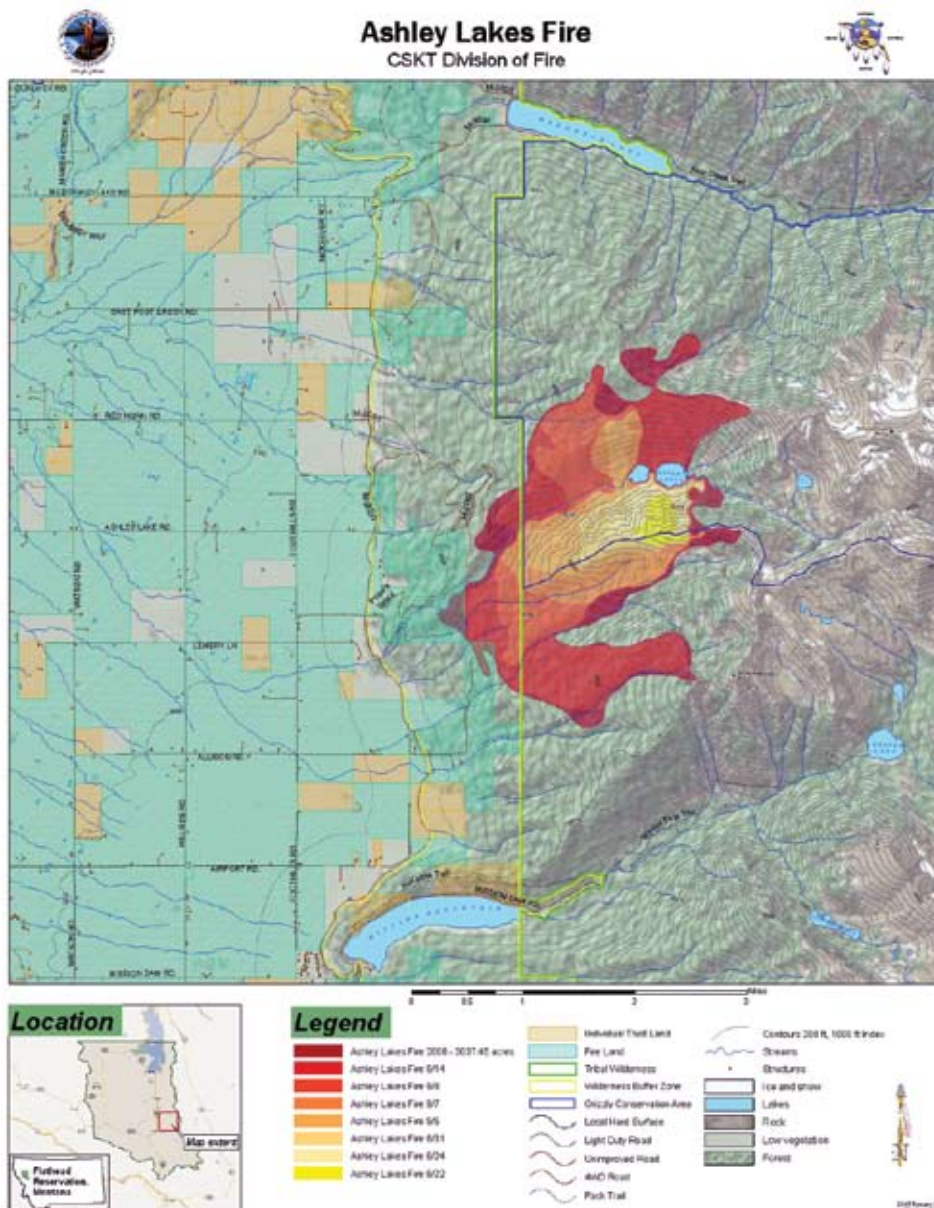
## Administration

# Chief Financial Officer Administrative Conference

~ Rufina Villicana - BIA/NIFC

The week of February 12<sup>th</sup>, the Budget Management Section along with individuals from the BIA-NIFC Administration Section attended the Annual BIA-OCFO Administrative Conference in Albuquerque, NM. In attendance from each section was: Magdalene Moran, Budget Officer; Rufina Villicana, Senior Budget Analyst; Esther (Gini) Broyles, Budget Analyst; Michelle Cruz-Salum, Contracting Officer; and Zoila Forrest-Davis, Procurement Technician.

The agenda for the conference covered an array of topics from FY 2006 Audit issues to Driving Policy. The 1<sup>st</sup> day of the conference focused on team development which proved to be one of the highlights of the week. The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) personnel had a chance to meet and interact with individuals from



The GIS Map shows the progression of the fire in the Mission Mountains from August 8 - September 15, 2007.

Central Office and the Field. This provided NIFC staff members the opportunity to forge new relationships and to renew old friendships.

Our participation in this conference provided National Interagency Fire Center staff the opportunity to present views and issues that are unique to the Wildland Fire Management program in areas such as:

- ◆ Driving Policy
- ◆ Credit Card
- ◆ Budgeting/Finance

The BIA-NIFC Budget Management section strives to remain current and informed on the changes that are constantly occurring within the Department and Bureau in order to better serve our Wildland Fire Management programs within Indian Country.

## Intertribal Timber Council ~ 30 Years in Partnership

~ Jim Erickson, ITC Fire Technical Specialist

The Intertribal Timber Council was established in 1976 as a non-profit nation-wide consortium of Indian tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and individuals dedicated to improving the management of natural resources of importance to Native American communities. This consortium has grown to 60+ tribes and Alaskan Native corporations.

The purpose of the Intertribal Timber Council is to:

- Promote sound, economic management of Indian forests
- Facilitate communication
- Works in partnership with the BIA and others interested in improving the management of Indian natural resources
- Helps establish natural resource based business enterprises
- Encourage the training and development of Indian foresters

This past June marked thirty years that the ITC has worked cooperatively with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), private industry, and academia to explore issues and identify practical strategies and initiatives to promote social, economic and ecological values while protecting and utilizing forests, soil, water, and wildlife. More recently ITC has forged new partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service and the establishment of their

Office of Tribal Relations as well as the National Association of State Foresters. These new and expanding partnerships provide opportunities for tribes to identify common issues and seek broad solutions that make sense for diverse land owners.

The severe fire season of 2000 triggered the expansion of fire funding and organizational growth. Fire budgets and programs expanded to a point that fire funding is now nearly twice the Forestry budget for resource management. This rapid growth spurred tremendous challenges and confusion for tribes and agencies. The ITC conferred with the BIA to seek assistance in monitoring these rapid changes. From this came the ITC Fire technical Specialist position to monitor policies, administrative procedures, planning, budget development, and the development of standards and guidelines applying to fire management.

The ITC Fire Technical Specialist represents ITC on the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). The WFLC is a cooperative interagency organization dedicated to achieving consistent implementation of the goals, actions, and policies in the National Fire Plan and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The NWCG provides national leadership to establish, implement, maintain and communicate

policy, standards, guidelines, and qualifications for the wildland fire program management.

Today tremendous congressional pressure is being put on these two entities and their federal staffs to control costs and find new ways to address fire management issues, particularly reducing suppression costs. Both BIA and ITC are monitoring these emerging issues and organizational changes as to their impact on Indian Country.

To help provide awareness of emerging issues and to gather feedback from tribes and agencies, ITC established the Fire Sub-committee (FSC). The committee meets before each quarterly board meeting. The meetings include an open format where everyone is welcome. Each meeting begins with a representative from BIA NIFC presenting information on a key fire topic selected by the fire sub-committee prior to the meeting. The meeting also includes information updates by the Fire Technical Specialist on key happenings since the prior meeting and discussion on issues presented to the group by member tribes and BIA field personnel.

These meetings are open to the public and intended to address current issues. People who have specific concerns are encouraged to present them to the Fire Technical Specialist (Jim Erickson: 509 633-1067 or jim.erickson@couleedam.net) prior to the quarterly meeting so the topic can be researched and appropriate personnel can be lined up as needed to share information and answer questions. The feedback to date has been positive on how the meetings are structured and the topics being covered. Please share your ideas and concerns.

Upcoming meetings are as scheduled:

1. April 25, 2007; Cherokee, NC
2. September 11, 2007; Pinetop, AZ
3. December 4, 2007; Portland, OR

Futures dates can be accessed on the ITC Fire web site: <http://itcnet.org/>.

The challenges we face are many and can best be addressed collectively.



# Boise Hosts FMO Meeting

~ Dave Koch, BIA/NIFC

Despite limited travel budgets and competing interests for time, BIA's Regional Fire Management leadership met in Boise in February to discuss numerous initiatives and evolving policy. Regional staff was joined by Central Office personnel from Washington and NIFC.



**Arch Wells, Deputy Director of Trust Services.**

Arch Wells, Deputy Director of Trust Services, delivered a rousing farewell-to-arms speech, and indicated his days of service to Indian Country (as a Fed) may be drawing to a close. Arch, always personable, always articulate, stressed the need to be more accountable; to address the tough issues head-on, tempering every decision with integrity and morality.

Chief Forester Bill Downes (Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire Management) gave an overview of national level operations, including some statistics showing the continued decline of our timber sale programs due to poor market conditions. Says Downes, "Harvest levels have not been this low since 1947". Reductions in timber harvesting have a direct impact on the comprehensive fuels management strategies employed on many reservations.

Mark Beighley, Director of the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC) spoke about efforts underway to define or clarify personal liability policy for fireline supervisors, in light of the fallout surrounding the 30-Mile, Cramer, and other recent

fatality fires. Also on the OWFC radar screen is to revisit the disparity between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior policy pertaining to the "lapsing" of Base-8 wages while engaged in suppression operations.

Formulation and revision of fire management budgets continues to be a hot topic for fire program managers. With the advent and subsequent stalling of the FPA (Fire Planning Analysis) initiative, managers are wondering whether a new budgeting process will ever surface. Program changes and new initiatives since the time FMPA analyses were completed (1998 for some regions, 2002/3 for others) has resulted in questions over the adequacy and distribution of current budgets. Consequently, Scott Bradshaw and the NIFC Planning Staff have agreed to formulate and implement some procedures for determining how intra-regional budgets should be distributed. This will help Regional Fire Program Managers validate and communicate the distribution process to field units.

IFPM continues to emerge as a hot topic, with discussion surrounding the approaching implementation deadline of October 1, 2009. Managers are interested in the consequences of an employee not meeting the minimum qualifications standards by that time, and what that might look like from an HR standpoint. Managers and supervisors were directed to provide sufficient opportunities to IFPM employees in order that they meet the requirements by the deadline.

Dennis Dupuis, Asst. Director for Fuels and Prevention is very encouraged over Indian Country fuels management citing exceeded targets in WUI and an improved track record in non-WUI accomplishments. Dupuis stated that "Eight out of twelve Regions exceeded their combined WUI and Non-WUI targets in FY-06, Outstanding!". The Northwest Region led by fuels guru Gene Lonning, received a plaque recognizing exemplary achievements in FY-06 (see photo).

In the end the meeting proved to be highly productive as friends parted ways feely sufficiently energized to embrace the challenges that lie ahead.



Back L to R: Darrell Ausborn, Great Plains Reg. FMO; Steve Heppner, Alaska Region FMO; Cory Winnie, Northwest Reg. FMO; Arch Wells, Deputy Director Trust Services; Mark Sahmaunt, Southern Plains Reg. FMO; Ron Recker, Pacific Reg. FMO; Dick Streeper Oklahoma Interregional Coord; Lyle Carlile, Chief NIFC; Middle L to R: Tony Recker, Eastern Reg. FMO; Bill Downes, Chief Forrester Office of Trust Services. Front L to R: Jason Greenley, Navajo Reg. FMO; Tom Corbin, Rocky Mtn. Reg.; Cal Pino, Southwest Reg. FMO; Seah Hart, Midwest Reg. FMO; Leon Ben, Jr., Western Reg. FMO



# Wildland Fire Use (WFU) Comes to Indian Country

~ Christopher Secakuku, Acting AFMO, Uintah and Ouray Agency - Western Region



**Initial size up indicated the fire was 5.5 miles away from the closest road.**

On the morning of June 7, 2006, smoke was reported in remote wilderness on the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation's southern extension, commonly known as Hill Creek. As resources were dispatched to confirm the report, fire managers began to think about the opportunity of Wildland Fire Use. It would be a first for the Uintah and Ouray Agency and the process of determining if this would qualify as a potential candidate started to unfold.

Wildland Fire Use (WFU) occurs when a lightning ignited fire is used to achieve natural resource benefits and objectives. WFU reintroduces fire back into its natural role and allows fire to do what nature intended by clearing fuels and debris, controlling noxious weeds, helping fire dependent species propagate, recycling nutrients, improving wildlife habitat, and providing other benefits. In order for a WFU to take place fire managers must evaluate firefighter and public safety, current and expected fire behavior, weather, values at risk, and location. A Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) must be developed and the situation must be reevaluated periodically. The option to use WFU as a management tool

must be addressed in an agency land management plan.

As the initial fire size-up was reported to fire managers, on June 7, 2006, the 20 acre, lightning ignited fire became the Saleratus WFU. The Saleratus

WFU was a Stage I WFU and managed as a Type 4 incident consisting of one Resource Advisor and aerial recon from rotor and fixed wing aircraft. The Saleratus Fire grew to be approximately 120 acres, and slowly burned for roughly four weeks before no smoke was again visible.

Throughout the duration of the Saleratus WFU, public meetings were held and the tribal council, along with the membership, were updated as to what was happening and why. Posters, information sheets, and maps were posted around the communities and articles appeared in the local newspaper and on the radio. Public awareness helped make this WFU a learning tool and a success.

By allowing the Saleratus WFU to take place, fire had been put back into its natural role and once again became part of Mother Nature's plan. Many wildlife species, including Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, will see improved habitat. In addition, vegetation will be allowed to evolve naturally. Now, in this remote wilderness area of the Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation, fire has done what it was intended to do – be part of a natural cycle.



**Natural barriers such as ridge tops and rock outcroppings were considered in the wildland fire**



**Aerial views illustrate rugged, poorly accessible terrain.**

*"Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."*

~ Will Rogers ~ 1879-1935





## BAER Succeeds after Fires Char 2/3's of Reservation Land

~ Paul Schlafly, Natural Resource Specialist



**Chaining after seed broadcast using two D-9 crawler tractors which drag a 360-foot section of smooth anchor chain across the seeded area. This process scarifies the soil surface, providing a microclimate more conducive to the germination of the seed and less susceptible to wind and water erosion.**

In three of the past four fire seasons, the Shivwits Indian Reservation in southwestern Utah has been over run by wildfires that have swept across the desert landscape. More than 2/3 of the approximately 28,000 acre Reservation has burned since 2003.

In the summer of 2003, when the area was several years into a severe drought, the Apex Fire swept across the Reservation and burned more than 17,000 acres. In 2005, three separate wildfires moved across the Reservation consuming more than 4,000 acres of trust lands. In 2006, two wildfires burned onto the Reservation from the south and charred approximately 3,800 acres. However, local BIA staff believes there is reason for optimism in planning for this year's fire season as a result of the considerable success of the BAER treatments implemented after the Apex Fire.

Many of the plant communities on and around the Reservation are presently dominated by cheatgrass/red brome as a result of many years of overgrazing and other misguided land management

practices. Plant communities that are dominated by these annual invasive grasses are prone to wildfires because of the fact that they provide continual cover and are dry by summer. Approximately 60% of the areas that had once hosted pinyon-juniper and black brush have been type-converted to a cheatgrass/red brome dominated plant community. Once converted, fire frequency is accelerated and unless measures are taken to impede the cheatgrass/red brome invasion, the cycle can continue indefinitely.

After the Apex Fire of 2003, local, regional and national BIA BAER personnel worked with the local BLM office, exchanging ideas and practices that brought success in the past on similar landscapes. The BIA Apex BAER Team, including Rich Schwab (NIFC), Keith Burnette (Western Regional Office) and James Dee (Southern Paiute Field Office), developed a BAER plan. The plan included seeding and chaining in areas where the soils were receptive and the slopes were not too steep. A seed mix composed of a combination of

perennial grasses, forbs and shrubs was prepared. The intent of the seed mix was to establish a short-term vegetative cover with cereal grains which provided site stabilization and protection the first growing season, and to provide a cover crop to nurture the establishment of perennial vegetation cover.

The seed was tested for purity and germination before acceptance by the Agency. Once accepted, the seed was coated with fertilizer to enhance germination, establishment, survival and vigor. The seed was aerially broadcast by helicopter over those portions of the fire that had suitable soils and slopes. The treatment included chaining after seed broadcast on approximately 2,400 acres. The chaining was accomplished by two D-9 crawler tractors dragging a 360-foot section of smooth anchor chain across the seeded area. The intent of the chaining was to scarify the soil surface, providing a microclimate more conducive to the germination of the seed.

The implementation of the Apex BAER Plan was overseen by Jeramie Ybright, Agency Fire Management Officer in the fall and winter of 2003-2004. By all accounts, the implementation of the specifications in the plan, combined with a higher than normal precipitation pattern in the area, rendered the treatments very successful within a year.

The long-term effect of that success can be seen in the BAER plan treatments that were done after the Shivwits fires in 2005 and 2006. Both of the BAER Plans that were developed, approved and implemented on the Shivwits Reservation in the last two years mirrored the Apex BAER Plan specifications. When the Agency began implementing the 2005 Shivwits BAER Plan, they were unsuccessful in procuring a chaining contractor to treat the seeded areas. Instead, Agency personnel chained the seeded areas by dragging a chain behind all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). So far, the seeding on the 2005 Shivwits Project has been minimally effective due to precipitation levels. However, the overall objective of impeding wildfire progression in the



Aerial broadcast seeding.

area was achieved this year. When the Reilly fire swept across the Reservation from the southwest and reached the perimeter of the area that had been seeded and chained with the ATV's, the fire was rapidly extinguished due to a lack of continuous fine fuels, normally comprised of cheatgrass/red brome.

In the past year, the Agency worked with Regional and National BIA BAER personnel in procuring their own smooth anchor chain. This chain was used during the implementation of the 2006 Jarvis/Cave Fire BAER Plan on approximately 725 acres of the Reservation that had been seeded. By mutual consent of the Tribe and Agency, the chain is stored on the Shivwits Reservation for future use.



Keith Burnette, Darryl Martinez, and Paul Schlafly inspect chain used for the Jarvis/Cave fire rehabilitation.

## Expanding the Use of Our Type 2 Crews

~ Tom Corbin , Rocky Mountain Geg FMO

Everyone is very aware the ordering and use of our Native American Type 2 crews for fire suppression work has been dwindling over the past few years. At the same time there has been an increase in the ordering and use of Type 2 Initial Attack (IA) crews throughout the nation. The major difference in the crews is the ability

for a Type 2 IA crew to be split up and used as initial attack modules. IA crews require squad bosses to be ICT5's and each squad includes a qualified sawyer.

In the interest of expanding the demand for Native American crews, the Rocky Mountain Region has

encouraged each unit to make an official request to the Region to develop Type 2 IA crew program at their respective locations. Most of the Reservations have responded with requests to expand their Indian crew programs to the next level by training and developing Type 2 IA crews. The benefits to implementing this approach are many, but the most important is that the crew members are seeing more work. As soon as a unit gets a Type 2 IA crew qualified and make them available in ROSS, they are ordered for some fire. There are always numerous unfilled orders in the system for Type 2 IA crews.

Our Type 2 IA crews are included and operate under the same Native American Crew Operating Plan, our NAC Plan, as the Type 2 crews. This is an operating plan that is used by most all the Native American crews in the entire geographic area, which involves three BIA regions. No change in the rules, just a change in the crew qualifications.

Of course, the other benefits are the additional training required to become an IA crew, especially the saw training we can now do because it is a requirement for IA crews to have qualified sawyers. Individuals are getting their Type 5 IC task books completed and more opportunities are available to the individuals. Another benefit that is being realized is the additional skill levels now available to help fight the going fires at home.

Fire fighting throughout the nation is changing. There are no longer the numbers of resources available to suppress fires in what one would call the traditional way, throwing everything at the fire including the kitchen sink, if it's available. The resources aren't there any more. So, the resources that are needed must be more skilled and adaptable than in the past. Our Type 2 IA crews will move us in that direction and provide the seed bed for crew development beyond the Type 2 level in the future.

*"Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it."*

~ Henry David Thoreau



# BIA Employees Deployed Overseas

~ Bodie Shaw, Deputy Chief NIFC



Printed by permission from the Herald Sun Newspaper, Melbourne, Australia

In late December, 2006, the United States responded to Australia's request for international help to cope with its wildfire emergency. Initially the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho sent a small contingent to Melbourne, Australia to begin the deployment: Tom Frey, BLM-NIFC International Program Manager, Bodie Shaw, BIA-NIFC Deputy Director, Rick Jensen, BLM-NIFC Operations, and Nick Lunde, USFS Type 2 IC from the Wallowa-Whitman Forest in Oregon.

The four individuals paved the way for the ensuing deployment of 108 firefighters to assist the State of Victoria during their escalating bushfire season. The 108 arrived on January 22nd and 23rd. Part of the 108 contingent included Jacqueline Hawley, Deputy, Fire Operations at BIA-NIFC, Paul Pooler, Interregional Fire Ecologist for Midwest and Great Plains Regions BIA-NIFC, and Dave Raney, AFMO Operations from Fort Apache Agency, Arizona.

To put this mission into perspective, the following should be known about Australia and the State of Victoria:

- 20 million people reside in Australia (U.S. 300 million)
- 7.7 million sq. km (U.S. 8 million in the lower 48 states)
- 6 states, 2 territories
- Victoria has 5 million people over 227,000 sq km (roughly the size of Idaho)

## Victoria has 3 Fire Agencies:

Dept. of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)--2,000 Employees, 600 seasonal fire fighters and they manage fire and emergency on all public lands.

Country Fire Authority (CFA)--58,000 Volunteers, 1,228 Brigades, 400 paid fire fighters and they manage fire and emergencies on country and regional private land.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB)--1,500 paid fire fighters and they manage fire and emergency metropolitan Melbourne.

## Yearly Average for fires in Victoria:

- 625 fires
- 101,500 hectares (250,820 acres)

## 30-year Average:

- 431 fires
- 106,941 hectares (264,270 acres)

## 2006-2007 Year-to-Date:

- 731 fires
- 1,192,359 hectares (2,946,438 acres)

Stuart Ord from Victoria's Department of Sustainability and Environment said the U.S. fire crews made a big difference.

"The Americans were used to very hot fires," he said. "They're used to working in very remote and steep, difficult country and that's much the same as we've got in Gippsland and the Alpine regions of Victoria where the fires are. They're very, very experienced fire-fighters. They're used to very hot situations."

The U.S. crews stayed in Australia for one month. About 50 New Zealand firefighters were drafted to help, along with a similar number from Canada.

A long drought, hot temperatures and strong winds made this a very uncomfortable summer for many Australians.

As in the US, many of the fires were caused by lightning strikes but a large number are started deliberately by arsonists.

## Ambassador McCallum Welcomes U.S. Firefighters in Melbourne

U.S. Ambassador Robert D. McCallum, Jr. and U.S. Consul General Earl M. Irving welcomed the U.S. firefighters to Melbourne at a dinner hosted by the Country Fire Authority and the

Department of Sustainability and Environment on January 23. Bodie Shaw, Deputy Director BIA-NIFC was the Master of Ceremonies.

Ambassador McCallum said, "We are very proud that American firefighters have been and will be supporting their Australian colleagues in the fight to contain record bush fires in Victoria. Their arrival to support Australian firefighting efforts reflects a common thread that runs through virtually every aspect of the relationship between Australia and the United States — and that is Australians and Americans stand together."

108 U.S. fire personnel, ranging from high level incident management teams to ground crews, are in Australia to assist Victorian authorities suppress bushfires that have been burning since the beginning of December. New Zealand and Canadian crews have also lent assistance.



Ambassador McCallum with firefighters from the U.S. helping to battle Australian bushfires ~ Photo courtesy of the US Embassy, Australia

This is the second time under the Wildfire Arrangement that the State of Victoria has requested assistance from U.S. firefighters.

Thirty-six U.S. firefighters assisted Victoria in 2003. In 2006, 120 Australian and New Zealand fire fighters assisted U.S. efforts to suppress fires throughout the United States. The U.S. firefighters will be in Victoria for approximately 30 days working under the direction of Victoria's emergency services authorities.

Many have asked what the differences are between managing fires in Australia versus the U.S. Primarily, Australia does not have a federal firefighting agency, the States are responsible for wildfire suppression. The State of Victoria and their various state agencies (DSE) work together to manage fires and share mutual aid with the local Country Fire Authority (CFA). We were ordered at the

request of the State of Victoria. Victoria uses an ICS system. Like us, their number one priority is safety. Some of the differences included:

- There are two IMT's assigned to manage the same area, one for day shift and one for night shift.
- The work schedule for state agency employees was 7 workdays for people who work within the region and 5 days plus 2 travel days for those who work outside the region. For the community volunteers (CFA) it was 3-5 workdays.
- The Victorians do not typically carry large standing IMT's. New team members coming and going were common.
- Firefighters do not carry fire shelters.
- Firefighters are required to use steel-toed boots (true for US while there also)
- In this large fire situation, personnel resources were so short, they usually only replaced what we had versus getting any additional resources.
- They did not carry a financial unit as part of their incident management teams. They had a small "time unit" that worked for Planning.
- They do not do a Delegation of Authority from the local resource manager to the Incident Controller (note "Controller" not "Commander"). Once a large bushfire starts, the Chief Fire Officer for the state has overall authority for suppression actions.
- Being in the southern hemisphere, the drier slopes are the north aspects.
- Due to high flammability of the eucalyptus and the stringy nature of its bark (they called these forests "Woolly Butt"), you can get very long distance spotting (up to 6 miles while we were there).

Everywhere we went the people were very friendly. Due to the news coverage about the fires and the participating agencies, most people we encountered knew that we were there to help in the firefighting effort and were very grateful. We heard a number of stories from people describing where they were, what they were doing and how upset they were when the large columns of smoke blew towards them at the height of the fire suppression activities.

During the one-month assignment, besides normal fire duties, our folks were given a 1-2 day orientation to firefighting in Australia (weather, fuels, topography etc.), U. S. representatives gave presentations to the State of



**"Before" photo courtesy of the Department of Sustainability and Environment**



**"After" ~ Rick Jensen, BLM/NIFC**

Victoria fire leaders and Country Fire Authority regarding various issues surrounding international differences in relation to firefighting. At the end, the US contingent presented a comprehensive deployment narrative about the assignment.

On the lighter side, we saw kangaroos, wallabies, black swans, emus, platypus, koala bears, wombats and numerous species of birds. Many had the chance to

swim in the Tasman Sea and by the end of our deployment we'd almost figured out the rules to the games of cricket and Aussie Rules Football.

The 108 U.S.A. firefighters returned home February 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. The fires have now been contained, but have consumed over 3 million acres of bush.

Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) chief fire officer Ewan Waller said the assistance of the Americans was greatly appreciated through one of the state's worst fire seasons and its longest running single firefighting campaign.

"The Americans' commitment and experience has helped us immensely in this firefighting and recovery effort," he said in a statement.

"Working alongside DSE and Country Fire Authority (CFA) crews they have protected Victorian communities and helped in the rehabilitation and recovery process."

"This deployment has built on the exchange of information and resources between our agencies, something we look forward to continuing in the future," Mr Waller said.

"We'd like to thank the firefighters, their families and the US National Interagency Fire Centre, for their help and support during this difficult fire campaign."

## Warm Springs Fire Dispatch Recognized

~ Holly M. Gill, News Editor The Madras Pioneer

The small Warm Springs fire dispatch unit won a big award last week at a regional conference in Seaside, OR.

Representatives Ken Lydy, assistant fire management officer, and lead dispatcher Norman Lucei, who is the only dispatcher in the office for most of the year, picked up the Outstanding Unit Award for 2006 "for significant contributions to the Northwest area coordination activities."



**Dispatcher Norman Lucei, left, and Ken Lydy, assistant fire management officer display awards.**



"It was a great honor for us," said Lydy, noting that the Warm Springs unit represents both the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. "For them to single us out really made us proud."

The Warm Springs award was the first given to a BIA dispatch unit since 1992, Lydy said.

"We're just a small operation compared with some of them that have as many as 32 people in summertime," Lucei explained. "I was stunned when they called our name."

The annual award is given out by the Northwest Coordination Center in Portland, which represents all wildland fire agencies in the Northwest.

*Thanks to the **The Madras Pioneer** (Wednesday, March 14, 2007 issue) for giving permission to reprint this article.*

## Outstanding Unit Award!

~Leslie Mitts, Reporter, Spilyay Tymoo

Hard work paid off for the staff at Fire Management. Warm Springs Fire Management recently received the annual "Outstanding Unit Award" from the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center.

According to Stephen Dickenson, emergency operations manager, each year the staff at the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center presents an award to the outstanding unit of the year. The award, he explained, recognizes people who display confidence, excellent levels of service, good attitudes and quality work ethic in general. As for Warm Springs Fire Management, he said, "They did exactly that."

While the staff remained exceptionally busy with local matters in Warm Springs, Dickenson said, "They also provided service to both their neighbors."

Crews traveled to the Deschutes National Forest and Mt. Hood National Forest, Dickenson said, and also provided camp crews.

"Mostly these ten-person crews go out and help us establish and maintain living conditions out in these fire camps," Dickenson said. "They really are the unsung heroes," he added. For those out fighting fires, the camp

crews provide an extensive amount of support back at camp, Dickenson said. When crews return back to camp, Dickenson said, "You want to be able to sleep in a good area and have a cold drink of water. These are the people that work tirelessly to make sure these fires are supported."

Ken Lydy, assistant fire management officer, said the camp crews spent a total of 376 days at camps last year—with multiple crews traveling throughout Washington, Oregon and California.

"The community really delivered the camp crews last summer," Lydy said. In return, Lydy said, "They brought back into the community almost half a million dollars."

In the past, Lydy said, crews have traveled throughout the U.S. Two years ago crews traveled to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, he said.

The local Hot Shot crew program also provided support this summer, Dickenson added. Those crews spent a total of 83 days in the field.

But the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center wanted to recognize more than just the amount of work that Fire Management does. One of the major reasons for the award, Dickenson said, involves the level of customer service provided. According to Dickenson, "Ken Lydy and his staff give you cheerful, good service. You can call them in the middle of the most difficult of situations and they will say, 'What can we do for you?'"

As a team, Dickenson said, the staff at Fire Management is very positive and upbeat. Besides providing support to fire crews throughout the northwest this summer, Dickenson said, there were plenty of fires nearby and locally that had to be dealt with.

The ability of Fire Management to handle so many things at once combines with their competency as a staff to make them the outstanding center of the year for 2006, Dickenson said. They received the award during the annual Northwest Dispatch Conference recently, Lydy said, and it came as quite a surprise.

"Usually I'm not speechless, but I was that night," Lydy said. "We're pretty proud of it."

In the past, Lydy said, only one other facility with the Bureau of Indian Affairs has received the award: the Yakama Nation in 1992.

"It's something that does not happen to small offices," Lydy said. "It was quite an honor for us."

Most offices that receive the award have a staff of at least eight people who work full-time throughout the year. In Warm Springs, only two people work in the dispatch office in the summertime.

According to Lydy, that often means a lot of extra work on the part of the two employees. He said, "Whether it be seven in the morning or midnight, they're here."

Norman Lucei has worked with Fire Management for over two decades—and since 1994 he's worked in dispatch, he said.

Now, as the Initial Attack Dispatcher, Lucei is humble about the work that he does. "It's pretty busy," he said—especially because during four days of the week, only one person is in the office. In fact, during the summer Lucei is on-call 24 hours a day.

"We're lucky if we get an eight hour day during the summertime," Lucei said. "Especially if it's really dry." Luckily, Lucei said, during the summer they have people from Forestry who are also trained in dispatch. For Lucei, the answer isn't simple as to why he stays motivated.

"The smell of smoke, I guess, is what everyone says," he explained. "When the smoke bell rings, everyone runs." As for the award, Lucei said, "It kind of stunned me a little bit when they announced our names."

Lucei agreed that it was an honor for a smaller office to receive the award. "There's a whole lot of other dispatch offices that are a lot bigger than this one," he added.

*Thanks to the **The Spilyay Tymoo** (Thursday, March 15, 2007 issue) for giving permission to reprint this article.*

"You can't fix stupid."

~ Stephen M. Dodds



## Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program

~ Mallory Eils, NIFC

Over the past 4 years we have seen the Wildland Fire Prevention program continue to grow within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Nationwide the BIA has gone from a very small staff of prevention folks in the field to a program that is very well respected by not only our peers in the BIA but by our interagency partners as well. As our program grows we continue to take a look at particular areas of concern in respect to our fire causes within Indian Country. One of the cause categories that has surfaced is in the area of Juvenile fire setting. Nationally, 15% of all fire starts fall into the Juvenile fire cause category. This comprises 19% of all human caused fire starts. We believe that as we see improvement in our fire investigation skills there will be a decrease in juvenile fire occurrence. To respond to this anticipated challenge in a proactive manner, the BIA Regional Prevention Program staff across Indian Country began to develop a strategy to respond to the problem of juvenile fire setting. The first step was for us to educate ourselves on how to deal with such a complex issue.

The Regional Prevention Program staff settled on a course the U.S. Fire Administration delivers, Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist (JFIS) I & II training to provide us the opportunity to learn more about this issue. Thirty-two BIA and tribal prevention personnel gathered at the Midwest Regional Office in Ft. Snelling, MN for the four-day training held at the end of January. The Juvenile Firesetter Course

provides fire personnel with a means to tackle the growing problem of juvenile firesetting. JFIS I addresses the identification and evaluation of firesetters and the determination of intervention strategies while JFIS II focuses more on program set-up, management and administration.

The first step to developing an effective Juvenile Firesetter program is to have a strong coalition of cooperators throughout the community. Coalition members often involve fire departments/fire prevention staff, schools, police departments, counselors, social services, Indian Health Services and juvenile justice systems. Other specialists and partners will most often be involved depending on the needs of the community. Fire investigators and prevention staff are the people who work closely with this issue. Therefore, we will have to be the ones to provide initiative and leadership to raise the community awareness and develop the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program. Through community education, awareness, and buy-in, a program of this nature can help keep children safe and contribute to reducing the number of unwanted human-caused fires on Indian lands.

The material presented at this training session will be very useful for prevention staff to use in their prevention programs. It provides a good base for identifying a juvenile firesetting problem and presents the steps necessary to effectively address the issue. It is also another tool for fire investigators, as they are often the first to deal with the juvenile that started the fire. The issue of juvenile firesetting does not need to go unnoticed any longer. Prevention personnel across the country are now armed with a new set of skills and information to address this growing problem. The juvenile fire setting

problem can have deep rooted issues beyond the capability of the average fire prevention specialist. We must work together to address juvenile fire setting through educational programs focused on teaching children about fire and how setting fires can negatively affect their lives.

*"In the early days of the Indian Territory, there were no such things as birth certificates. You being there was certificate enough."*

~ Will Rogers ~ 1879-1935



## Training

## BIA Employees Complete UNLV Education Program

~ Soledad Holquin, Fire Prevention, Pacific Region

Last summer the Bureau of Land Management accepted applications for BIA and Tribal employees to attend courses offered at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. These courses were provided by the federal



government to assist personnel in meeting the academic requirements of the 401 Professional Series. Seven

students (see photo caption) from four western states completed the courses. Congratulations to these

seven students for their successful completion of this requirement.



**L to R:** Duane Campbell, BIA San Carlos, AZ; Terry Joyce, BLM Southern CA (Started as BIA); Jim Nanamkin, BIA Pacific Regional Office, Sacramento, CA; Soledad Holguin, BIA Pacific Regional Office, Sacramento, CA; Dana Cook, BIA Cedarville, CA; Jeff Moyer, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Spokane, WA; Ed Christy, BIA Ft. Hall, ID.

## Becoming an Effective Facilitative Instructor

~ Steve Jackson, Wildland Fire Operations Specialist, Salt Lake BLM

The BIA sponsored its 5<sup>th</sup> annual NWCG M-410, Facilitative Instructor training January 8 – 12, 2007, in Cabazon, California at the Morongo Resort.

This course meets the requirements referenced in the NWCG *Field Manager's Course Guide* to instruct 200 level or higher courses. In addition to helping one become compliant with yet another federal policy, this course also focuses on ways to improve:

- the quality of instruction at the local, geographic, and national level;
- interaction with other teachers and course coordinators in a cadre environment;
- skills for conducting meetings, briefings, After Action Reviews; and
- any communication scenario where information sharing within dynamic groups is the key.

This year's course continued the tradition of combining individuals from a variety of fire positions and locations from the wildfire community in an arena where they are encouraged to try techniques and methods that reach beyond fire topics. Furthermore, Tribal and Bureau employees not working in Fire Management are also encouraged to participate.



**Facilitative Instructor: Back L to R:** David Garcia, Southern Pueblo Agency (SPA); Jonathan Lee, Western Reg.; Benson Johnson, Navajo; Joseph Ruise, Pechanga Fire Dept.; Josh Williams, Concho Agency.

**Middle: L to R:** Francis Clark, Navajo; Learoyd Begay, Navajo; George Violante, Sycuan; Joseph Lee Blackcrow, Ft. Belknap; Brian Billie, Navajo; Diane Lockwood, Southern Plains Reg. Office; Henry Munoz, Sequoia NF; Kenny Jaramillo, SPA; Jesse Zuniga Gila River Fire Dept.; Patrick Kenny Salt Lake Field Office BLM.

**Front: L to R:** Juan Mendez, Sycuan; Leon Ben Jr., Western Region; Fred Sabas, Sycuan; Rick Madrigal, Sycuan; Steve Jackson Salt Lake Field Office BLM; Hector Medrano, Sequoia NF; Steve Heppner, Alaska Region; Ray Ruiz, Sr., Sycuan; Brian Tonihka, SPA.

The benefits of this course can be realized by anyone, regardless of occupation. The ability to communicate effectively, to engage an audience, and to create a trust climate that facilitates a positive learning environment is a universally acknowledged essential ingredient in the recipe for individual, family, or corporate success.

Throw in a cadre with a passion for mentoring and sharing the skills of teaching and leading, and you get a

## Rx Burning at Truxton Canyon Agency

~ Jonathan Lee, Assistant FMO Western Region

The Truxton Canyon Agency utilized personnel from other agencies within the Western Region to accomplish hand pile and broadcast burning projects this past October and November. The main goal for the agency was to burn all the hand piles that have accumulated during the past 4 years. The Fire Management Program at the agency lacks qualified personnel and shortage of manpower to accomplish these goals. Typically, the Kaibab National Forest and Kingman BLM Field Office assist the agency with prescribed fire. However, neither agency was available to do their own burning programs, so the Fire Management Officer requested assistance from the Regional office. The Region provided two burn bosses who worked with trainees in initiating and completing task books for Type II and III Burn Boss, Firing Boss and Fire Effects Monitor positions. Pima Agency provided two personnel with task books and one qualified Firing

week where the comments on Friday are often:

*"This is the best course I have ever had . . . it will not only help me with my fire job, but also with real life"*

Imagine that.

The Branch of Fire Management hosts the M-410, Facilitative Instructor course annually, on the second week of January. It is also hosted by Regional Training Centers and some colleges. For more information, contact Dave Koch at 208-387-5577.



**Strip Head Firing**

Boss. The Fire Use Training Academy sent a six person module to assist for a few days before traveling to the Prescott National Forest for a broadcast burn assignment. The agency only had four GS personnel and three AD personnel to operate the engines and equipment needed for the burn. A meeting was held with the Agency Superintendent, Administrative Officer, Fire Management Officer and Regional staff on the need for more manpower to complete the pile burning project. It was decided a twenty person crew was needed to finish this large project. The Golden Eagles Hotshot Crew was chosen as the Geronimo Hotshots were committed to burning at San Carlos Agency and the remaining Fort Apache Hotshots were burning at Ft. Apache Agency at the time. The Western and Pacific Regional Offices and 638 Contract Personnel collaborated with both tribes, and the crew was ordered for a 14-day assignment to Truxton Canon Agency. A total of 4,496 acres of hand piles were burned, including 1,700 acres of broadcast burning. The hotshot crew was highly motivated, safe, conscientious, and provided leadership and support throughout the burning operations. The hotshot crew gained valuable prescribed burning experience in a timber fuel model (FM-8) which is not typical for their area in Southern California. The agency received insight into the structure,

organization, leadership, and capabilities of an Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC). Overall, the Golden Eagles Hotshots were extremely effective in assisting the agency in meeting their goals in prescribed burning this year. If there are additional questions, contact Richard Powskey, Fire Management Officer, Truxton Canon Agency, Peach Springs, AZ at (928) 769-2279



**On-Site Briefing**



**Holding Operations**

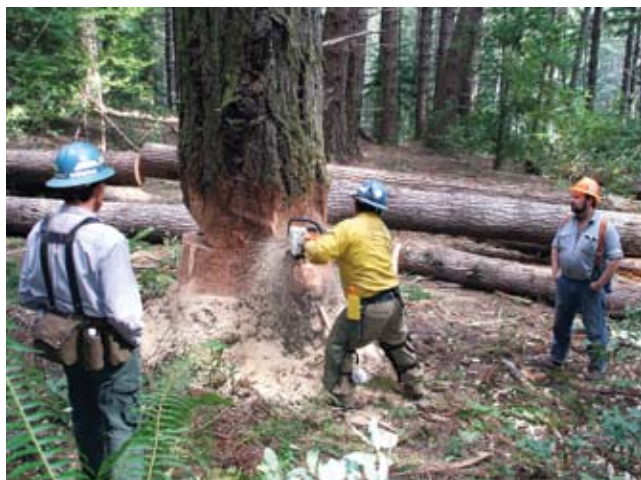


**Pile Burning**



# Tree Coming Down!

~ Dave Koch, NIFC



Instructors Leo La Paz, Jr. and John Pollman look on as student Dilbert Seciwa (Zuni Hot Shot) cuts down a 40-in Douglas Fir.

The Yurok Tribe hosted a C-Faller course March 21-24 near beautiful Weitchpec, California. This is the third year in a row the Yurok Tribe has generously allowed Bureau and Tribal fallers from around the country to experience the felling of large diameter trees on the productive slopes above the Klamath River in Northern California. The trees, 36 to 54 inch diameter Douglas fir, averaged 150 feet in height.

Students included Shaun Willeto and Brian Bille (Navajo Hotshots), Jose Deza and Robert Goodwin (Golden Eagles Hotshots), Pascal Slick and Deon Classay (Ft. Apache Hotshots), Eugene Evans and Harry Wheeler, Jr. (Mescalero Hotshots), Dilbert Seciwa (Zuni Hotshots), Mike Lee and Blair Rowley (Hoopa Tribe), David Garcia (Southern Pueblos), Francis Clark (Navajo), and Jack Haggerty (Yakama).

The instructors were John Pollman (Professional Timber Faller), Leo La Paz (C-Faller Program Director and Navajo IHC Superintendent) and Dave Koch (BIA Training Officer).

This training is very hands on, and involves both evaluation and practice. Students learn and practice simple techniques to fall big or complex trees safely and efficiently, every time. Says Program Director Leo La Paz, "Our intent is to give these students skills that they can not only use but pass on to others, to ensure everyone is on the same page when falling big trees. We have seen vast improvement in our fallers since we created this program in 2002. Like leadership

training in recent years has standardized the use of the AAR, our felling course has resulted in a standard cutting technique used by our employees on the fireline."

The prep work and logistics coordination for the course were handled by Walt Lara, Sr. (the "Black Snake") and Bob Blanchard.

Walt, 72 energetic years old and member of the Yurok Tribe, has been working in the woods near Weitchpec since 1949. Walt is

a Field Coordinator for Yurok's Natural Resource Department and his current responsibilities include working with timber sales contractors; providing cultural resource expertise and guidance to the Department; and story telling, in which he is extremely versatile.

Bob Blanchard is a "jack of all trades Forester", responsible for developing environmental analyses, preparing timber sales packages, administering timber sale contracts, and managing a fire suppression program.

Also supporting the training where the Hoopa Tribe Wildland Fire Department who provided a training room the first day of the course and, the California Indian Forest and Fire Management Council (CIFFMC), represented by president Merv George, who presented us with a donation for student lunches.

The generosity of these Northern California cooperators continues to benefit our forestry and fire management organizations by providing opportunities to acquire skills necessary to keep our employees safe in the woods and on the fireline. Thanks to all for their support!



Walt Lara, Sr. also known as the "Black Snake".



Bob Blanchard and Walt Lara stand beside their new wildland fire truck.



C-Certifier Leo La Paz discusses felling techniques to the students gathered around the stump.

*"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."*

~ Winston Churchill ~ 1874-1965



# From the Publishers

~ Dave Koch and Laurel Simos

## Fire Season 2007

By the time the next issue of Smoke Signals is being produced, many of you will be very busy managing wildland fires. We are looking for your innovative ideas for reducing suppression and fire management costs. Please take the time to take some notes and share those successes with Smoke Signals so we can pass them to our readers.

Work safely this season so you can go home to your loved ones in the same condition in which they sent you out!

## Thanks!

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

## Submission Criteria

When submitting articles, please include the author's name, what their position is and caption information for your photos. 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!

If your article doesn't appear in the issue for which it was submitted, it should appear in an upcoming issue of Smoke Signals, or, possibly we didn't receive it.

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

March 1  
June 1  
September 1  
December 1

## Distribution

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

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