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Aerial Ignition Gets the Job Done at San Carlos

~ William T. Grauel, PhD, Fire Use Specialist San Carlos Apache Tribe

Introduction

The San Carlos Tribal Fire Use Program strives to achieve ecologically meaningful fire effects in a cost efficient manner at landscape scales. The Hilltop Alpha & Bravo burn plan encompasses over 13,000 acres of ponderosa pine forest surrounded by juniper savannah uplands. With a primary goal of hazardous fuel reduction (HFR) in recently logged forest, the Hilltop project was developed with the recognition that ponderosa pine forests and timber sales exist in a larger fire-dependant landscape. Recent HFR burn plans had been confined to smaller acreages within timber sale boundaries and implemented by ground ignition

with drip torches. The Hilltop plan was designed to utilize the Plastic Sphere Dispenser in a helicopter to accomplish the desired fire effects on more acres at a lower cost than ground ignition alone.

Timeline

Planning began in July 2007. The Hilltop A & B burn plan was authored



Figure 4. Despite the relatively large acreage and smoke column, the fire stayed on the ground while removing much of the oak and juniper understory and logging slash.

by Duane Chapman, Supervisory Fuels Technician, and received a technical review by Fire Behavior Analyst Ralan Hartzell of neighboring Fort Apache Agency. The goal of the project was to generate an intense understory burn in the pine forest, sufficient to reduce ladder fuels and raise the average canopy fuel base height.



Figure 2. Aerial ignition proceeded throughout the afternoon.
Photo taken by Dr. Grauer through the lense of his binoculars.

Employing aerial ignition required careful planning (Figure 1), including limited road closures during hunting season. The San Carlos Recreation and Wildlife Department supported the project by supplying Rangers to enforce the temporary road closures.

The weather in late October 2008 looked favorable, and Chuck Maxwell of Predictive Services in Albuquerque provided frequent 7-10 day outlooks. Airwest Helicopters of Glendale, Arizona provided the aerial platform. Lemual Juan of BIA San Carlos Agency was helicopter manager and serviced the Premo Mark III plastic sphere dispenser (PSD). John Cervantes of BIA Fort Apache Agency was brought in as the PSD operator while Carlos Nosie, Assistant Fuels Specialist from the Western Regional Office served as Firing Boss. John Lee, Western Regional AFMO, came onboard as Safety Officer for the project while Duane Chapman was Burn Boss. The Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO) was William Grauel.

Implementation and Fire effects

At midday on October 30 all holding forces were in place and ignition began. The helicopter operation began by reinforcing the black line that

had been installed by San Carlos Fire Use and the Geronimo Hotshots the week before. With temperatures in the mid-70's, relative humidity around 20%, and one- and ten-hour fuels around 7% moisture, the aerial ignition proceeded throughout the afternoon (Figure 2). Holding forces had little to do other than observe as the afternoon's aerial ignition accomplished about 600 acres.

The Burn Boss, Firing Boss, and FEMO surveyed the burn at dawn the next morning to observe fire effects and discuss ignition patterns (Figure 3). Ignition began before midmorning on October 31, with the helicopter and firing team dropping the plastic spheres in strips oriented perpendicular to the prevailing southwest wind. Near the end of the day, the main road bordering the project was closed and ground-based ignition crews burned off the road as the aerially-ignited fire approached downhill. No holding issues arose and by the end of the

day the 3000 acre burn unit was complete. Despite the relatively large acreage and smoke column (Figure 4), the fire stayed on the ground while removing much of the oak and juniper understory and logging slash. Burndown was rapid, smoke was completely dispersed by the next morning, and little patrolling was necessary. The burn unit contains ten FIREMON plots that were installed in 2007. Their remeasurement in early 2009 will provide quantitative data on fuel reduction and scorch mortality.

Cost efficiency

Aerial ignition allows for the planning of larger prescribed burns, a necessity in forests whose fire cycles are hundreds of years longer than the historical record shows as normal. In addition, although flight time costs seem high, the ability to



Figure 3. The Burn Boss, Firing Boss, and FEMO surveyed the burn at dawn the next morning to observe fire effects and discuss ignition patterns.



Figure 1. Employing aerial ignition required careful planning including limited road closures during hunting season.

accomplish larger acreages outweighs the costs associated with using an aerial platform. The 3000 acres accomplished on the Hilltop A&B prescribed burn cost approximately

\$22 per acre. In previous years, these types of HFR burns, within the boundaries of timber sales only and done with ground ignition, generally cost between \$35 and \$40

per acre. With proper planning and implementation, aerial ignition is the way to go!



Memorial

Remembering Fain LeBeau

~ Theresa Ann Wesley, NIFC

Never say "Goodbye" - it's always, "See You Later"

The date was October 17, 2008 in beautiful downtown Eagle Butte, South Dakota. Retirement preparations were well under way by late afternoon and only a few things were left to do - then came the wait. Fain LeBeau was going to retire from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and I was honored with the opportunity to be the master of ceremonies at his retirement.

Fain LeBeau came to the Bureau of Indian Affairs on October 17, 1975. He was hired as a general laborer. He then became a Range Technician. He was hired in his last position as a Supervisory Range Technician in 2002 at BIA-NIFC. Fain created a top-notch Model 52 Engine program known throughout the nation. His work ethic was impeccable and his people skills superb. He led by example and managed his team effectively. He took pride in his program, had a great staff, and a 'can do' attitude that always made things happen. Thirty-three years to the date, Fain was going to call it quits and retire and do other things he wanted to do.

That night things could not have gone better. The program started



Fain LeBeau while he was Lead Instructor for the 2008 Engine Academy at Crow Creek Agency.

on time, several guest speakers got up and spoke, among them, Mr. Greg Bourland, Cheyenne River Agency Superintendent, Dalan Romero, Associate Chief, BIA-NIFC Operations, and several life time friends and acquaintances. Dinner was served and the Drum Group Wakinyan Maza finished with an honor song. The band, **Stampede**, performed and the night was danced away.

I returned to Boise ready to let everyone know how well things went at the retirement celebration. However, that was cut short because the news of Fain LeBeau's passing arrived. Where one week we were planning the retirement of a good friend, now very different preparations had to be undertaken.

With heavy heart, I passed the news onto the staff. The LeBeau family requested my return to Eagle Butte. My arrival was met with the buzzing of what was completed, what needed to be done and what else should be considered. Dates were set and things were set into motion.

October 26, 2008 a wake was performed at the Eagle Butte High School gymnasium. I have never seen so many people gather. Many traveled a long way to attend. Many got up and spoke of the good things and what Fain meant to them. I realized that on this visit, I was to wear more than one hat and that night I spoke as the close friend and sister of Fain LeBeau. As the others, I stood in front of all of them and gave personal testimony as to how Fain and I met, how we were



Dancing the night away.

kindred spirits and shared fun times together, shared families and mutual friends and how the fire world affected both our lives. And like the others, I cried at the loss of my brother, my friend, and my coworker. I learned how to speak from the heart.

October 27, 2008 the funeral was held at the Eagle Butte High School gymnasium. Mr. Phillip LeBeau officiated. He was Fain's brother. The gym was full of family, friends and firefighters. Keynote speakers were Terry Hodgkiss, BIA Standing Rock Agency, Faron Krueger, ND State Forestry, and Scott Weston, Pine Ridge Agency. That day I represented the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Interagency Fire Center and I spoke of Fain, the kind of person he was, his personality, his accomplishments, his history. I presented the family with the Black Mountain plaque from the Wildland Firefighter Foundation. I told the audience how not only the BIA would miss him but the interagency fire community as well; the Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, National Park Service, and state, tribal and private fire programs. As a final salute to Fain, we had all the firefighters and fire personnel stand and salute. It was the least we could

do for him. He gave 33 years of his life to the government, a lot of time away from his family, fighting to

preserve lands, finding ways to do things better and he never made it to retirement.

The procession to the cemetery was phenomenal. Fain was to be transported in the C5500, his favorite truck. First came the escort, the local fire trucks, the C5500 with Fain and his family inside then rest of the family, friends and community. During the trip to the cemetery, I remembered Fain telling me one time, one never says *Goodbye*, one always says *See You Later*. And when the graveside services were over, I did just that. I was proud to be there for him and his family. I was honored to be a part of Fain's life and feel this tragedy somehow allowed me to grow stronger. Thank you Fain Lebeau on a job well done, have a good journey and I will see you later.



Fain and his family enjoy his retirement party..



The cemetery procession.

Robyn Broyles Joins the BIA

~ Robyn Broyles, NIFC



Robyn Broyles joined the BIA on December 8th as the National Fire Communication and Education Specialist, located at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise. Her career began in Pinedale Wyoming where she worked for two seasons as an engine operator for the Forest Service. She then moved to Ukiah, Oregon to gain rappel experience on the Frazier rappel crew. During her first season, she sustained a shoulder injury, hence, her career transitioned into the dispatch arena. She worked at the National Interagency Coordination Center for six seasons while finishing her degree in Natural Resource Management and Fire Ecology from the University of Idaho. After graduation, she moved to the Northwest to gain further interagency experience with the Washington Department of Natural Resources as an initial attack dispatcher. Robyn then moved to Moab, Utah to gain aviation dispatch skills as the Lead Aviation Dispatcher.

Robyn comes to the BIA with enthusiasm and excitement to support the field. It is her intent she will become a contributing member of the national team and spread the news of the happenings in Indian country.

David Peters Joins the BIA

~ David Peters, NIFC



Welcome to David Peters, an '83 graduate of Colorado State in Natural Resources Management. David has worked for Colorado Parks and Wildlife Divisions, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, since starting his natural resource career in 1979. David's professional experience includes being a Soil Conservationist in Indiana and Colorado, a Forester in Oregon and Washington, and a Fire Prevention/Education/Mitigation Specialist in Arizona and Montana. He is currently enjoying his new job in Montana and is glad to be back with the BIA.

Forester's Log: Bears and Burns

©Mary Stuever, November 2008
Photos by Barbara Garrity.

The Forester's Log is a monthly column published in newspapers and magazines primarily in the American west. Stuever is a forester in the American Southwest. She can be reached at sse@nmia.com. For the column this month, here is a story from 1995 which will appear in Mary's new book, The Forester's Log: Musings from the Woods, UNM Press, Spring 2009.



Mary Stuever

July 1995

Fresh burn areas draw all kinds of curious animals, and foresters are among the crowd. From the years of mopping up forest fires—spending the last few days on assignment putting out any smoking log or duff that is near the control line—I have witnessed many animals that find fresh burned ground fascinating. The elk come in, and browse on the needles of remaining saplings as if they are discovering a smoke-flavored delicacy. The raptors fly around, hoping to catch some rodent emerging from the safety of their burrow but no longer into a world that offers immediate camouflage. The bears saunter through, turning over rocks and logs and generally just seeming to look around.

Often we debate if we see so many bears after a fire because bears are attracted to burn areas, or if it bears are always this close in the woods, but until the brush has burned away, they are just hidden from our view.

Therefore, I should not have been so surprised that afternoon, when marking trees on Buddy Elkins' ranch outside of Grants, to hear three sharp whistles coming from the drainage below me.

As a homeschooling parent and a consulting forester, my kids often work with me. In this instance, my work was to mark leave trees on a

private salvage sale after a major wildfire. The work required me to evaluate every tree in the area which meant continually moving up and down the slope.

My seven-year old twins preferred playing in the drainage bottom while I worked the hillsides with marking trees that had the best chance of post-fire survival.

We all had whistles, and through the day we would communicate. One whistle was a simple question, 'everything is fine, but where are you?' This was answered with single whistle. Throughout the day, each ten to twenty minutes, we would signal each other. I would also leave my gallon paint cans with the kids, and tie in with them in person each time I emptied the quart-

size paint gun I carried with me.

The two whistle call was more serious in nature. It meant come here as soon as you can, even though it is not an emergency. Usually the kids used this call to signal they were ready for lunch, or that they needed a jacket from the car, or some other pressing reason to ask Mom to set down her paint can for awhile.

The three whistle call was a real emergency, and up until this day, we had never used it. When I heard it, I immediately came crashing down the hill slope in the direction of the kids. As soon as I spotted Roland he was waving his arms at me to stop.

Between us there was a large black bear that was fixed on something

behind the kids. It only took a second to realize it was a bear cub. I hollered at the bear to let her know I was behind her and to distract her from my children. Then I told the twins to start moving slowly up the drainage toward our car away from the bears.

Mama Bear must have had the same idea, because she growled at her cub and the little guy started moving down the drainage. In less than a minute, I was reunited with my cubs, and she was reunited with hers.

I'm not sure what the bear family did the rest of the day, but we broke camp and headed home. I left the kids with their father, and finished the marking job alone.



Fuels

Chippy Creek Fire

~ Laura Atkins, SCA, Northwest Region

"A new fire is now burning southwest of the Flathead Valley with a plume visible from Kalispell."

This simple, if somewhat innocuous statement found on a Montana television website on July 31, 2007, could not foresee what would become Montana's largest wildfire of the 2007 season: the Chippy Creek Fire totaled 99,090 acres, of which 35,266 were on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

On August 3, 2007 the Chippy Creek Fire spread from the Lolo National Forest, where it had burned 30,000 acres, and took hold on the Flathead Indian Reservation burning until its

control date of September 24, 2007.

For Fuels Managers the scorched landscape would provide them with valuable answers, information, and opportunities to study the impacts of wildfire on the effectiveness of past fuels treatments which were designed to lessen the effects of this kind of catastrophic event on timber resources.

One crucial move to the successful control of the wildfire was the dozer line put in on August 8th. This strategic move allowed wildland firefighters to tie into the Dry Fork Fuels Treatment Area and successfully burn out the area. The backfire took approximately

two days to burn back into the main fire. Flame lengths remained low until it hit the untreated areas. This backfire allowed the team to contain the southeast edge of the fire.

The Dry Fork Fuels Treatment Area is a project dating back to 1997 with an individual Tree Selection harvest. In 1999 there was a harvest pile and burn with underburns carried out in 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2005 to total an estimated 800 acres of treatment. The goals and objectives of the treatment area included: restoration and maintenance of historical Ponderosa Pine old growth forest conditions; hazardous fuel reduction; stimulate seral shrub growth; and big game habitat enhancement by treating 70-

90% of the project area with a scorch mortality of less than 30% in the over story of the Ponderosa Pine.

Estimates of mortality in fuels treatments sites and in adjacent untreated areas shows a clear relationship of the effectiveness of a well planned Fuels Management program in an area that has seen fuel loadings accumulate beyond normal range of variability in the last eight to ten years. Lethal scorch mortality in the Dry Fork Underburn Project was less than 5% with an average scorch height of three feet. This is astonishing in the face of a recent history of extremely low soil moisture aggravated by a prolonged regional

Post Wildfire

Fuel loading in the Dry Fork Underburn Project was reduced from 12 tons/acre to 7 tons/acre post-treatment and following wildfire only two tons/acre were consumed due to a reduction in fine fuels. On the adjacent Lolo National Forest where total biomass reached 84 tons/acre about 60% of the fire area burned at high severity to the degree that even root systems were affected (Rapid Assessment of Vegetation Condition After Fire or RAVG).



Ron Swaney, Flathead Fuels Manager, intersecting untreated (left) and treated (right) area

which maintain moderate canopy cover, cooler soil temperatures, and sites dominated by native vegetation are not favorable for the spread of noxious weeds, though local populations of invasive plants may persist depending on the species.

Dry Fork Underburn Project			
	Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment	Post-Wildfire
Fuel Model(s)	Mixed 2, 9, 10	Mixed 2 & 9	Mixed 2 & 9
Fuel Loading	12 tons/acre	7 tons/acre	5 tons/acre

A look at pre and post wildfire conditions offers a clear glimpse into the success of the treatments.

drought during the past decade causing wildland fires to burn hotter, longer, and deeper into the soil horizon. The lethal scorch mortality in adjacent, untreated sites was in the range of 75-100% with average scorch heights of 80 feet.

Something to watch with a cautious eye is the invasion of noxious weeds. The spread of plants like spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe* spp.) tends to occur after severe burns where direct sunlight and exposed mineral soils in south facing aspects are conducive to invasion, particularly below 5000 feet. Underburn projects

The moderating influence of effective fuels treatments was clearly shown in the Dry Fork Underburn Project. Minimal loss of timber, watershed, and wildlife habitat resources and at the same time stimulating growth of grasses, forbs and herbaceous plants for soil protection, wildlife forage and snow/rain intercept to allow slow infiltration into streams and rivers are numerous benefits of careful fuels applications.



Pre-treated area <5% lethal scorch mortality



Untreated area 75-100% scorch mortality

Great Plains SCA Annual Awards Dinner

~ Paul Pooler, Fire Ecologist, Midwest and Great Plains Regions
~ Photos by Morgan Beveridge, BIA Fuels Specialist



Left to right: Molly Lundberg; SCA Project Leader, Morgan Beveridge; Fuels Specialist, BIA, Gene Sipes; SCA Intern, Davyd Betchkal; SCA Intern, Mary Taber, Fire Ecologist NIFC, Bethany Heins; SCA Intern, and Angela Ryczkowski; SCA Intern.

The BIA, Great Plains Region, has hosted SCA crews for three years and for the third year; a season close-out

dinner was sponsored by the SCA crew. The Region presented certificates of appreciation to the SCA crew. NIFC

representation was also present during this year's dinner.

The SCA crews have been the driving force behind the monitoring of fuels projects within the Great Plains for the BIA. The task for the 2008 SCA crew was to collect pre and post treatment data for planning future prescribed fire as well as studying the effects of fire on the prairies throughout the Great Plains Region. FIREMON plots have been established on all reservations within the Great Plains as well as the Meskwaki Tribe in Tama, Iowa.

Columbia River Road Fire

~ Laura Atkins, SCA, Northwest Regional Office

On August 7, 2008 at 1:00 AM, a fire was reported along the Columbia River Road. As crews responded to the fire, they discovered a total of six fires. All the fires were contained early in the morning, except one that was burning upslope from the road in grass and sagebrush. By mid-morning, the fire had burned approximately three hundred acres. Structure protection began at 6:00 am. The Columbia River Road fire's suppression efforts in conjunction with fuels reduction treatments is explained below.

Initial attack for the first day shift involved four dozers, fourteen engines, seven overhead staff, and multiple aircraft. During the first burning period most of the available resources were focused on structure protection along the Columbia River Road. The fire burned to the ridge top and was difficult to access. Suppression efforts then focused on the west flank, using bucket drops, and retardant to try and keep the fire from burning up through Hopkins Canyon. Some dozers were able to build an indirect line along the west flank up Hopkins Canyon, but

due to a lack of personnel, a burn out was not attempted. Dozers were sent to the north of the fire where there was a road system and a ridge line from which to anchor the fireline, but had to be pulled out when the fire heated up and started to make a run to the north during the early afternoon.

About mid afternoon the fire jumped the dozer line in Hopkins Canyon and made a run to the northwest towards Whitmore Lookout and the rural ranching community of Kartar. It was about this time that the fire moved in to timber north and northwest of the fire. By early evening the fire was threatening structures in Kartar and had crossed the Coyote Creek Road approximately 6

miles northwest of the fire origin. At this point the night shift began and focused mostly on structure protection in Kartar. One hand crew worked on anchoring the southeast flank of the fire through the night and a burn out operation was conducted.

Washington Interagency Incident and Management Team #4 (WIIMT#4) was assigned the fire the next morning. In 4 days with maximum temperatures of 100 F, the fire had grown to 21,900



Aerial View of treatment vs. non-treatment area within fire.

acres. Suppression resources including five helicopters, an air tanker, twenty-four engines, twelve dozers, fifteen water tenders, and 702 personnel were challenged by the fire behavior and rate of spread. WIIMT#4 focused on maintaining safety principles in the application of all strategies to control the fire. Trigger points were developed to modify or alter suppression tactics should the fire go near wildland-urban interfaces (WUI). Numerous structures on the west flank (Columbia River Road and Kartar area) of the fire were protected by the local fire districts and Colville Confederated Tribes fire crews.

Resource damage was further reduced within and adjacent to fuels reduction treatment areas. The tribe treated 6 WUI treatment areas within the fire perimeter. Treatments consisted of thinning, piling, and piling burn treatments over 862 acres. The treatments were part of the HWY 155 WUI Project and in addition, there were 3 hazardous fuel reduction (HFR) treatment areas within the fire. 1,259 acres were underburned. The underburning was part of the Coyote Creek HFR Project. The presence of the underburn treatment areas along the east flank of the fire slowed fire growth, reduced fire intensity, and made it possible to effectively contain the east flank. The blocks were burned in 2006 and 2007. Unfortunately, the 6 WUI treatments were located in the path of the head of the fire which at that time had significant column development and exhibited extreme fire behavior, including crown fire with spotting to a half mile. It appears that within the WUI treatment areas, fire fell back to the ground but was intense enough to result in significant scorch mortality. Resources were not available at that time to take advantage of the reduced fire behavior. The fire blew through these treatments and kept going.

Lessons learned from the wildfire included three main points. For one, wider fuel breaks would have been more effective. Secondly, the previously completed pile and burn treatments should have been followed by an underburn. Finally, fuel break location should be carefully considered. Many of the WUI fuels breaks ran parallel to an untreated draw. A road served as a boundary between the draw and the fuel break, but when the fire moved into the draw,



Untreated area within fire.



Ground view of treated area withing fire.

significant heat was generated. This contributed to the scorch mortality in the fuel break and would have cut off fire fighters escape route if an attempt to suppress the fire had been made here.

This fire was a good example of the importance of fuels treatments and wildfire. Lessons learned from the Columbia River Road wildfire are invaluable to the wildfire management at Colville, and hopefully to other fire management officials. When terrain, fuels, and weather combine to make suppression efforts extremely difficult, the benefits of fuel reduction treatments are critical in minimizing the impacts of catastrophic fires.



BIA~Great Plains Region Monitoring Site Tour

~ Paul Pooler, Fire Ecologist Midwest and Great Plains Regions

NIFC, Regional and Agency Staff conducted a fuels treatment monitoring site tour on three Great Plains Region project sites in November of 2008. Sites visited were on the Crow Creek, Lower Brule and Santee Sioux Indian Reservations. Prescribed burn and mechanical fuel treatment areas and FIREMON plots established by the Student Conservation Association at the three Agencies were visited.

Data collected on FIREMON sites is used to obtain a current inventory of vegetative composition, structure and fuel loading for future treatment planning. It is compared to FEIS (Fire Effects



From Left to right: Clem Zephier, Santee Crew Foreman; Paul Pooler, Great Plains/Midwest Region Fire Ecologist; Mary Taber, NIFC Fire Ecologist; DuWayne Traversie, Winnebago Agency Fuels Specialist and Andy Baker, Winnebago Agency Natural Resource Officer discuss fire effects on juniper at the Joe George Project Site on the Santee Sioux Reservation.

effectiveness of RX fires on sites that were formerly managed by the Corps of Engineers along the Missouri River. Thompson stated that due to the seed bank in the soil, fire appears to be the most practical management tool to eradicate introduced species and initiate growth of native vegetation. This will meet the goals and many objectives of the Agency and the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

The Santee Reservation is continuing to mechanically treat juniper followed by broadcast burning. Andy Baker, Natural Resource Officer, stated this ongoing fuel treatment project has helped increase native grass production and benefit wildlife habitat. Introduced grasses such as crested wheatgrass are a concern at Lower Brule Reservation. Avery Thompson, Lower Brule's Fuels Specialist, is using FIREMON data to monitor the



Amos Isburg, Soils Technician, and Mary Taber, NIFC Fire Ecologist, discuss FIREMON plot placement and the value of photo records on Crow Creek Sioux Reservation's Wolf Creek Project Site.

Inventory System) and other local inventories for consistency. Expectations of plant response to fire, documented in FEIS and other local records, are used as planning tools for fire prescriptions in the Great Plains.



From Left to right: Lawrence "Avery" Thompson, Lower Brule Agency Fuels Specialist; Mary Taber, NIFC Fire Ecologist and Paul Pooler, Great Plains/Midwest Region Fire Ecologist identify vegetative differences between burned and unburned areas of the Iron Nation Project at Lower Brule Reservation.



Winnebago Agency's "Joe George" red cedar management project site at Santee. The photo represents a small segment of the total project, where over 1,000 acres of eastern red cedar have been mechanically treated by the Tribe, broadcast burned and placed on a prescribed burn rotation by the Agency.





Rosebud Agency Wildland Fire Operations Specialist Retires

~ Steven Ipswitch, Fire Management Officer, Rosebud Agency

After twenty years with Rosebud Agency, Operations Specialist Gene Emery retired on January 21, 2009.

Gene began his career as a firefighter in the Simi Valley area of California in 1978. After fighting fire in California for a number of years, as well as attending a semester at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, Gene returned to his home in Rosebud and began working there as a firefighter. He also attended college at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion and Sinte Gleska University in Mission.

In those twenty years he has spent time as a firefighter, fire management officer, and operations specialist, as well as helping out the Land Operations and Facilities programs with his ranching expertise. He became qualified as an Incident Commander Type 3, Task Force Leader, and Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2. Gene wrote the most recent edition of the Fire Management Plan, and has responded to thousands of fires at Rosebud Agency, as well as many other parts of the United States.

We all wish Gene the best of luck in retirement!



Smoke Signals was unable to obtain a photograph of Gene.



Fire Prevention Welcomes Kim Smiskin & Henry Kuehne

~ Laura Atkins, SCA, Northwest Region



Kim Smiskin

The Northwest Region would like to welcome Kim Smiskin and Henry Kuehne to the Colville Fire Prevention program.

Kim began her firefighting career in 2004 as an Emergency Fire Fighter, and quickly moved up to Engine Boss. She was an Engine Operator for two seasons on Colville Engine 123. She is currently a qualified Faller Type A, an ICT5, Firing Boss Trainee, Engine Boss Trainee, Prevention Team Member Trainee, and a Fire Investigator Trainee. She is the proud mother of two children, Kyle J. Manley and Kendra J. Manley. In her work as a



Henry Kuehne and Smokey Bear. Henry is the one on the left.



Prevention Technician, Kim hopes to earn the respect of the community, especially the youth.

Henry attended college in Spokane and the University of Idaho after serving in the army for three years. For the next fifteen years after college he worked in Fire Management in Omak/Nespelem Forestry. During this time, he was able to work his way to a RXB2 and an ICT4. The concept of preventing fires before they start is a new approach for Henry after his long career of burning on prescribed fires and fire suppression on wildfires. Concerning his new role, he explains, he most enjoys meeting the public and discussing ways to prevent fires.

Just recently, the two implemented a Smokey Bear Poster Contest that reached five different schools in the area. This amounted to over fifty entries. A winner from each of the schools was chosen, based on the prevention message portrayed



Winning poster on display.

on the poster. The winner was awarded a plaque, a t-shirt with the prevention poster design, and the poster is displayed in the home town community. Out of the five winners chosen, a grand prize winner was selected and the winning poster is currently displayed at the Mt. Tolman Fire Center.



Looking over poster entrees



The work Henry and Kim will accomplish is vital to the success of the Colville fire program. We welcome them and look forward to what they can achieve for fire prevention in Indian Country.



Spreading the Smokey message!

Benefits of Ordering Native American Fire Prevention Teams

~ Marco Minjarez, Fort Apache Fire Prevention Specialist

I remember going to work as a member of a hotshot crew who had been dispatched to a “fire assignment”. Everyone was excited.

“How large is the fire?” I asked.

“There is no fire,” I was told, “we’ll be on standby!”

I remember sitting around and waiting for fires to start, yet there was no lightning predicted. We were waiting for a human-cause fires? I never did see a Fire Prevention Team.

Fortunately the use of Fire Prevention Education Teams (FPET) has grown in recent years. An FPET may provide skilled and mobile personnel for fire prevention and education activities. They can be ordered to support a variety of situations affecting large or small geographic areas. An FPET may be requested at the local (or zone), state, region, or national levels depending on the availability of those qualified to fill the request. Teams are effective in the reduction of unwanted human-caused wildland ignitions under the following conditions:

- When wildland severity conditions are imminent;
- when unusually high fire occurrence is anticipated due to human activity, weather conditions, or hazardous fuels conditions;
- when an above normal incidence of human caused fires exists;
- when a unit is experiencing high arson occurrence;
- when local fire resources are low due to high fire activity or assignments out of the local area.

Prevention teams are designed to supplement, not replace, local prevention and education program efforts on a short term basis.

Local fire managers should consider the use of FPET well before periods of severe burning conditions or unusually high fire occurrence are being experienced. In general, FPETs should be activated long before the worst case scenario occurs. The Regional WUI/Prevention Specialists must be consulted in the decision making process. In addition, the processing of a request for a national FPET must be coordinated by the Regional WUI Prevention Specialist.

Using personnel that are knowledgeable about the Native American value system as well as cultural aspects are beneficial when the need for a prevention team arises in Indian Country. The exact makeup of FPETs depends upon local needs. Typical teams consist of a Team Leader, Public Affairs Officer, Prevention Specialist(s), and optional trainee or other team members as the situation dictates. The number of members on the team depends on the work to be performed.

FPETs can be used for both specific prevention work (such as supporting arson investigation/prevention) or for general prevention work during periods of elevated workload.

Specifically, FPETs can:

- Document, illustrate and communicate the severity of the situation;
- facilitate community awareness and education in fire prevention and prescribed burning;
- coordinate announcement of interagency restrictions and closures;
- coordinate and/or develop fire prevention campaigns for special target groups, tribal, state and local agencies, and elected officials;

- Promote public and personal responsibility regarding fire prevention in the wildland/urban interface (FIREWISE);
- Assist Incident Management Teams in accomplishing their objectives in working with the public to develop fire protection plans;
- Promote “WeTip” program during periods of increased arson activity.

I have worked with fire prevention for five years. It took a while to reprogram my brain to think proactively instead of just being reactive. I had to train myself to think in terms of prevention instead of only thinking about suppression.

Something else to consider is that the hotshot crew cost \$24 – \$25 thousand dollars for two weeks. The cost of four prevention team members runs around four thousand dollars for the same two weeks.

I’ve found that it is pretty difficult to measure the successes of our prevention programs. How many fires have we prevented? How many homes have we saved? I remember asking this question to a veteran prevention specialist, and she said “Just say we prevented all of them, plus the one that didn’t burn down the whole forest!”

All I have to do is look to the west side of my reservation where the Rodeo-Chediski fire burned and to remember how it looked before the fire. I also remember how many people it took to put out that fire. The Rodeo Fire was started by a person that had started fires in the same area previously but those fires were never investigated. If we had fire investigators, the Rodeo may never have been started. The Chedeski was started by a person that was in a closed area. For the cost of sign materials we could have avoided the loss of more than 400 homes. The total cost of suppressing these fires was more than \$4 million dollars. I have lost almost half my reservation due to human-caused fires. Don’t let this happen to you. Prevention works!

Wildfire Awareness Week

~ Val Christianson, Fire Prevention/Investigation Coordinator, Western/Navajo/Southwest BIA Regions
March 29-April 4, 2009

The spring winds have arrived and with a below average snowfall and rain accumulation this winter for much of the entire Southwest, this could mean one very possible thing: the increased risk of wildfire throughout our rural communities. The Governor of Arizona will proclaim **March 29-April 4 as 'Wildfire Awareness Week'**. The purpose of this week will be for all of the land management agencies, along with the County and State Fire Marshall's Office, to encourage the vigilance for home and property owners in being proactive in protecting these values from the very real threat of wildfire. Some very basic mitigation measures property owners can take to safeguard their values-at-risk include (but are certainly not limited to):

1. Clean your roofs, gutters, downspouts and porches completely clear of all loose debris,
2. Trim away all vegetation that overhangs your roof, patio and porches,
3. If possible, remove all vegetation within the close proximity of your dwellings that could carry a flame into these dwellings. if not possible, prune up your trees and shrubs so they cannot carry a flame from the ground (ladder fuels).
4. Rake all of the down needles and leaves that have accumulated over the winter downwind and away from your dwellings,
5. Obey all open-burning rules and regulations that the County Fire Marshall or County Sheriff may have in place. **ALWAYS** call them before you do any open burning on your property and notify your downwind neighbors that you are going to burn as well,
6. When you do controlled burning on your property, keep your piles small, away from other surface and aerial fuels, have loose soil and a sturdy shovel, and available water to control the burn. **THIS IS CRUCIAL!**
7. Remember which direction your prevailing winds come from on your property and move your stack/piles of firewood to the downwind direction from your dwelling. Most of our winds in the Spring in Arizona are out of the southwest,
8. Clean all overhanging vegetation from around any utility lines and clean all loose vegetation from underneath these lines. **BE CAREFUL!** If there is any question as to vegetation near your power lines, **CALL your Rural Electric Association (REA) Cooperative** staff and ask for advice,
9. Keep all loose debris and vegetation away from any gas, fuels or solvents on your property,
10. Have evacuation plans rehearsed and valuables gathered should you need to leave your property in the face of an oncoming fire front.
11. For more information as to how to better protect your property from the threat of wildfire, call your local County Fire Chief or your County Cooperative Extension Agent.

For AZ/NM Fire Restrictions, call toll-free 1-877-864-6985.

For fire information for Arizona, go to www.azfireinfo.com

For more fire restriction information, go to www.publiclands.org/firenews/AZ.php

For more wildfire prevention information, go to www.firewise.org

From the 'Southwest Area (Interagency) Wildfire Prevention-Information Committee'

Lady Astor: "Winston, if I were your wife I'd put poison in your coffee."

Winston: "Nancy, if I were your husband I'd drink it."

*Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan's **The Glitter and the Gold** she writes that the exchange occurred at Blenheim when her son was host.*

*See the American edition of Martin Gilbert's **In Search of Churchill** (not in the British edition). In **Nancy: The Life of Lady Astor**, Christopher Sykes confirms Consuelo Balsan's account. "It sounds like an invention but is well authenticated. [Churchill] and the Astors were staying with Churchill's cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, at Blenheim Palace. Nancy and Churchill argued ferociously throughout the weekend."*

Blacksnake's Corner

~ Walt Lara - Yurok Forestry

I have always been taught to respect the forces of nature. I believe that those who work effectively in forest fire management understand this concept. I also believe that this understanding comes from our experiences and the teachings of our ancestors.

My Grandmother, Josie, who has been the biggest influence in my life, came from the village of Espeu, known today as Gold Bluffs located in the California State Park along the Pacific Coast. Miners had pretty much infiltrated the Pacific North Coast in their quest for gold during the turn of the century. Espeu became a target for their greed.

At eight years old my Grandmother and her immediate family were given one day to vacate the village. Grandma Josie remembers trading the miners pieces of gold nuggets that she had picked-up along the beach, for bread. Grandma Josie and her family traveled south to Chapek, where the other side of her family lived.

Chapek village crested Stone Lagoon and during high tides the ocean water flowed over into the lagoon. This is where she grew up. Later, she and my Grandfather raised five children at Oosamich which was across the lagoon from Chapek.

Oosamich overlooked Freshwater and Stone Lagoons. It was a traditional hunting area that had a hole, 6' deep by 8' diameter, dug by my Grandmother's people when she was young. The perimeter of the hole was covered with brush. When they hunted, they would run the elk down a v-shaped brush shoot into this pit and then use their bows and arrows to kill the elk. Although not nearly as deep, the pit is still there today.

My Grandparents had always planted gardens, grains for the animals, raised livestock, fished daily and had deer meat since the deer would raid the oat fields on occasion. So by the time I came along, my Grandparents were quite good at survival during a time of

such tribulations for Indian people.

Grandma Josie was known for her sun-dried surf fish, as well as other sea foods that she could preserve or prepare.

There were always friends and family that would travel from the Klamath river or Hoopa to trade for a suit case or gunny sack full of her specialties.

There was so much knowledge and history of the Yurok People that my Grandmother shared. Stories that would make you laugh and cry at the same time. I think about how hard she worked and it always brings a smile to my face.

Once in the fall of the year, when I was eleven years old, my Grandfather and I were returning from our hunting trip. As we made the turn around a mountain, about three miles from Oosamich, we noticed smoke that was fast and furiously bubbling ahead.

"Oh boy, she's a burnin' again!" my Grandpa said as we raced up the beach toward home. That little 1936 Five Window Coop, was just a rattling up the road.

I knew in an instant what my Grandmother had done. She would light the long stocks of a hollow weed on the flower end, place it in the under brush and gently blow down the stock. With the help of my cousins, grandfather, and myself, these burns were always managed pretty well.

My Grandmother had always looked forward to burning season. She said it was a tool for renewal for the livestock, wildlife, gardens, herbs, and gathering materials, and to clean out the underbrush in case of lightning storms. It was always uncanny how



Walt's Grandmother Josie.

she timed her burns just before the rain. I think she watched the weather, forgot she was seventy-eight years old, and her feelings of stewardship to the hillside took over. She probably thought that the hunting trip might last two or more days. Because she had often preformed this duty, (I might add it was one that she loved), she never imagined it would get away from her.

By the time we reached the hillside it was out of control. My Grandma's body moved quickly while motioning us to park out of the way of the fire. For someone who was so soft spoken in three languages, she seemed to command orders quite loudly. My Grandmother stood alone watching the blaze. Her long skirt, hands and face were covered in soot. Only the sparkle of her beaming eyes shone. I could not even see the hundred-and-eleven tattoo that she wore with such pride on her chin.

The north wind kept the blaze held to the rocky bluff that day. It burned out on it's own. I don't think my Grandmother was afraid for one minute.

I often question whether or not she had planned it that way. However, the forces of nature she respected so much seemed to work with her.

Thanks!

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

Submission Criteria

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

March 1
June 1
September 1
December 1

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

Distribution

Please route this publication to your staff as well as to your EFFers. 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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Article Submission Checklist

- Author's name
- Author's title
- Author's agency/location

- High resolution jpg photos
- Photo captions
- Names of people in photo and where they work

- Contact name, number, and email address