



INTERMOUNTAIN MESSENGER

National Park Service

Visitor & Resource Protection; Fire & Aviation Management

OCTOBER 14, 2011

INTERMOUNTAIN MESSENGER

Work on Work *By Billy Shott*

I was having a conversation with our regional Fire Management Officer Mike Davin this week and we were both lamenting how we have a lot of extra work to do this month in addition to our usual duties...Mike called it "work on work". The term resonated with me, maybe it does with you as well. The new fiscal year brings a lot of "work on work". I know many of you are also feeling the pressure of increased work load around this time of year when conventional wisdom would make you assume things *should* slow down. It got me asking just how important is all this extra work? To me I think the answer depends on how we view change.

What do you want to achieve this fiscal year? Whatever your goals may be chances are it involves change, either personal or professional. Even if your job was perfect this year it's going to involve adapting to other changes to keep it that way. Even if your relationships were perfect this year something will change that will require you to change as well. There's a lot of theory on (successful) change out there and even more books full of recommendations. The common thread in all of these seem to be how we approach inevitable change; proactively or reactively.

Jack Welch, successful CEO of General Electric for 20 years, was once quoted: "Don't Manage, lead change before you have to." I think anticipating and planning is an example what Mr. Welch meant by "leading change".

So, is "work on work" extra work? Is anticipating change extra work? If you don't want to plan on participating in a wellness program how much time will you spend thru the year managing your weight or fitness? If you don't want to document a meaningful and clear performance plan this month how many months will you be managing your supervisor's or employee's expectations? If you don't want to plan your budget this month, will you be managing the budget for 11 months perhaps right down to the last minute? If you don't want to update your COOP plan how much time will be wasted trying to respond to an emergency in or near your park? A little "work on work" this month might make sure you don't spend a lot of time reacting to what comes at you the next 11.

This month we in the VRP, as you, are actively working on work. We are compiling *Continued on page 12*

Continuity Planning Information *By Mike Archer*

The Summer of 2011 brought some large-scale emergency operations to the Intermountain Region, including wildfires that forced evacuations. While the evacuation plans are stand alone emergency response plans, their execution will likely also require a Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan to be implemented. The COOP plan addresses:

- **What** will occur in a continuity situation.
- **How** and **how quickly** continuity actions must occur.
- **Where** continuity operations will occur.
- **Who** will participate in continuity operations.

The National Park Service and every Park has operations that must be performed, or rapidly and efficiently resumed, in an emergency. While the impact of an emergency cannot be predicted, planning for operations under such conditions can mitigate the impact of the emergency on our people, our facilities and our mission.

A COOP plan establishes policy and guidance to ensure the execution of the critical functions for the Park in the event that an emergency in its service area threatens or incapacitates operations, and/or requires the relocation of selected personnel and functions.

COOP planning is a good business practice and is part of the fundamental mission of all agencies as responsible and reliable public institutions. The changing threat environment and recent emergencies have shifted awareness to the need for COOP capabilities that enable agencies to continue their critical functions across a broad spectrum of emergencies.

A Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan outlines steps to be taken in an emergency situation to minimize disruption to **essential functions** and return the agency to normal operations as soon as possible.

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- ♦ 2012 Chief Ranger's Training
- ♦ Structural Responsibilities & Resources
- ♦ IMR Sets All Time Record
- ♦ Staff Contact



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Continuity Planning Information By Mike Archer

At the most basic level, COOP planning aims to identify:

- Risks,
- Institute preventative mechanisms, and
- Develop measures to deal with consequences when prevention fails.

An organization's capability to perform its essential functions rests on four pillars.



1. **Leadership** is critical to provide support for continuity planning and ensure continuity of essential functions.
1. **Staff** must be sufficiently trained and cross-trained to perform their duties in a continuity environment.
2. **Facilities** must be adequate, separate locations to ensure execution of essential functions.
3. **Communication systems** and technology must be interoperable, robust, and reliable.

Elements of viable continuity capability include:

1. **Essential Functions** - a subset of government and other organizational functions that are determined to be critical activities used to identify supporting tasks and resources that must be included in the agency's and organization's continuity planning process.
2. **Orders of Succession** - essential part of an agency's and organization's continuity plan to ensure that agency and

organizational personnel know who assumes the authority and responsibility of the agency's and organization's leadership if that leadership is incapacitated or becomes otherwise unavailable during a continuity situation.

3. **Delegations of Authority** - establish who has the right to make key decisions during a continuity situation.
4. **Continuity Facilities** - alternate facilities from which an agency and organization can perform its Essential Functions in a threat-free environment.
5. **Continuity Communications** - the availability and redundancy of critical communications systems to support connectivity to internal and external organizations, customers, and the public is vital to the success of agency and organization operations.
6. **Vital Records Management** - the identification, protection and ready availability of electronic and hard copy documents, references, records, information systems, data management software and equipment needed to support essential functions during a continuity situation.
7. **Human Capital** - provides guidance to emergency employees and other special categories of employees who are activated by an agency and organization to perform assigned response duties during a continuity event.
8. **Tests, Training, and Exercises (TT&E)** - Provisions made for the identification, training, and preparedness of personnel capable of relocating to alternate facilities to support the continuation of the performance of essential

functions.

9. **Devolution of Control and Direction** - capability to transfer statutory authority and responsibility for essential functions from an agency's and organization's primary operating staff and facilities to other agency and organization employees and facilities, and to sustain that operational capability for an extended period.
10. **Reconstitution** - the process by which surviving and/or replacement agency and organizational personnel resume normal agency operations from the original or replacement primary operating facility

Park COOP Planning Considerations

As with many planning endeavors, developing a COOP plan may seem like a daunting; however, if a process is put in place and the elephant is eaten one bite at a time, it is manageable. Working systematically through the elements describe above allows valuable and critical information to be established as you go.

Developing the Continuity of Operations plan will likely be delegated to the Chief Ranger. While this is appropriate, make sure that the Superintendent's authority is publicly behind the effort to secure buy-in and participation from all Divisions.

Establish a COOP Planner and an interdivisional COOP Planning Team if possible to assure that all Divisions and programs are represented throughout the process.

The Continuity of Operations plan is separate from an emergency response plan. This may seem logical and clear; however, as you

begin planning, be aware of the tendency for emergency response to creep into the discussion. That is the world we live in the majority of the time and it will be natural to revert to that framework.

Don't over task resources in the plan. Especially at the park level, many of your "go-to" employees may already be tasked with Incident Management responsibilities for the precipitating emergency response (hurricane, wildland fire, etc.). This may mean that additional resources will need to be trained up to assume Incident Management roles specific to COOP activation.

Resources

The following resources may be helpful for developing your Park's Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan:

1. Contact RLES Mike Archer, Intermountain Regional Office COOP Manager.
2. FEMA Continuity Planning site: Multiple resources for COOP Planning (Directives, Templates, Training, Outreach ideas, etc.) <http://www.fema.gov/about/org/nep/coop/index.shtml#6>
3. There are two online training courses available from the FEMA website. They are each about an hour or less. IS-546 is a good overview if you do not have any background experience in the COOP.
 - IS-546 "Continuity of Operations Awareness" Training Module <http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is546a.asp>
 - IS-547.a "Introduction to Continuity of Operations" Training Module <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/IS547a.asp>

Structural Fire Responsibilities & Resources by Todd Neitzel

Fire prevention week was the week of October 9, and reminds all of us on the importance of fire prevention. With another fiscal year behind us, it will be winter season soon and preparations are necessary. During the deep freeze of FY11, several parks in IMR experienced automatic sprinkler system breaks, creating over \$250,000 in damage and repair. Several projects included the replacement or system modifications to the existing installed fire protection systems due to non-compliance or performance issues. Through IMR/VRP program audits, and a National Office A-123 audit, several trends have evolved indicating the fire protection systems are not being maintained, fire protection projects are not being reviewed by the regional Structural Fire Manager, annual fire prevention inspections are not being done, and the common thread, the park Structural Fire Management Plan (SFMP) is incomplete. The SFMP is the most significant component of the Park structural fire program. The document is a comprehensive plan developed by all Park divisions ensuring overlapping continuity and compliance with the Park structural fire program. The document identifies the Park intentions and responsible division for all aspects of a Park structural fire program including inspection, testing and maintenance of fire protection systems, annual inspections, training, contact information and much more.

Fire protection and code interpretation can be very perplexing and challenging, especially for a Park with limited resources. The IMR/VRP Structural Fire Branch is comprised of one person, adding exceptional challenges when attempting to meet contracting deadlines for critical Park fire protection projects. Looking at a crystal ball, future challenges could include limited project funding, program compliance requirements and



deadlines, and limited skill sets to meet the project needs could be more challenging than experienced to date. Unfortunately, these challenges increase the risk of loss.

Fortunately, the Structural Fire program has access to a group of fire professionals at an affordable rate. We have been using the services of a group of VIPs to help us solve structural fire problems helping with projects. They are mostly retired, usually being able to respond to travel requests about as fast as a park can produce a travel authorization. To date, they have provided valuable assistance in IMR to GLAC, GUMO, FOUN, FOLA, MEVE, FODO, ROMO and TUMA. In addition, they provided technical review and consultation without travel offering valuable second opinions. Of course, being VIPs they come at no cost to the park unit, other than normal travel expenses. Their work has been an exception to the saying, "You get what you pay for." Often we get better service and advice than we have paid for from AE firms. The VIP cadre has exceptional experience in most areas of Structural Fire. They assist in code analyses and equivalencies, building review and consultation, fire alarm and sprinkler system evaluation, document review, specification development, and water supply improvements.

Another valuable resource for Structural Fire Management Plans (SFMP) is a powerful husband and wife team that are emergency services consultants that conducted over eleven planning projects for seven Pacific West and Intermountain parks during the past two years. Working closely with WASO and Regional staff, they developed a structural fire management plan process resulting in a park 'review-ready' policy compliant structural fire management plan. The on-site planning process generally takes three weeks to complete and they often provide additional volunteer work. During their visit, they assess the Parks program, and meet with the Park

managers to ensure they meet the Parks needs. They will meet with all division managers and identify issues and offer recommended solutions. The work they do is conducted as hybrid volunteer/contractors. As a contractor, their rate charge a below-bid-threshold fee for their services. However, they require an RV site for their motor home. They are also exploring another option to minimize on-site visits, which could be a viable alternative for Park consideration.

Cultural resource has available an excellent resource. Fire protection Andrew (Andy) Wilson has been involved with the VIP program since retirement of 32 year career with the Smithsonian. Andy has a B.S. in Fire Protection Engineering from the University of Maryland. Andy serves on several national and international committees working to promote the protection of museums, libraries, historic buildings, and other cultural institutions from fire. He provides consultant/resource services for any cultural institution requesting assistance in risk assessments, consultation cost effective solutions to problems, instructor/speaker/educator on various life safety and structural fire protection topics/systems, plan reviews, fire inspections of properties and witnessing acceptance tests of various fire protection systems.

The VIP Cadre is a very valuable asset to the IMR Structural Fire program. With limited NPS resources, this group of professionals offers their years of professional services to benefit the NPS IMR. Each Park has a structural fire program. The Park programs are required to meet policy and relevant code requirements. The VIP is an inexpensive resource to meet these requirements. If you are interested in using VIP services, or want to learn more about them, please contact Todd Neitzel, Branch Chief Structural Fire at 303-969-2723 or email Todd_Neitzel@nps.gov.



"The VIP Cadre is a very valuable asset to the IMR Structural Fire Program."

The 2012 Chief Ranger Training (possibly...) by Dave Horne



"I had good mentors and people to turn to for advice. If it were not for them, I would have felt a little lost and not as confident."

Background

The 2012 Chief Ranger's Training is a three day training course to be held (tentatively) in Phoenix, Arizona on **February 7-9, 2012**. This is a continuation of a biennial tradition in the Intermountain Region and has received consistent positive feedback. In the recent past the course has been held in Denver (2008) and San Antonio (2010). The training is also the venue utilized to present the *Intermountain Region Chief Ranger Excellence Award*, a tradition that began in 2010.

In our current environment of limited travel funds, new rules have been established that require approvals at the department level to assemble a group greater than thirty people. The IMR Chief Ranger Trainings generally accommodate about one hundred participants (not all are Chief Rangers). We have submitted our request to hold this year's training and are currently awaiting approval.

Upon approval of the training, reservations should be made at the following at the **Embassy Suites Phoenix**, 2333 E. Thomas Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85016 (866-866-8102). The IMR Chief Ranger Awards Dinner will be held on February 8, from 6:00-10:00 PM at Coach & Willie's Restaurant, 412 S. 3rd Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85004. The IMR Chief Ranger Excellence Award will be presented along with other awards. We will notify IMR Chiefs as soon as approval is received (or if it is not).

Developing the Agenda

This training agenda was developed in response to our customer's needs and input. In September of this year a survey was distributed to IMR Chief Rangers with two goals in mind. The first was to collect a range of opinions on suggested objectives for the training. The second was to follow up on the 2010 training

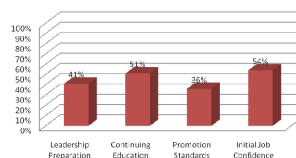
themes and gather baseline data on the current status of leadership development for rangers in the IMR.

Baseline Data

The survey was completed by a sample of 33 Supervisory Park Rangers, the majority being Chief Rangers (71%) and included submissions from Deputy/Assistant Chiefs (6%) and other field supervisors. The spread of pay grades among the sample resembled a classic bell curve with GS-12 having the most entries.

There were four primary questions that sought to evaluate the level of leadership preparation, continuing education, promotion standards, and initial supervisory job confidence. The questions are presented below with a brief summary of results.

IMR Survey Overall Results



1. Leadership Preparation: How trained and prepared were you when you began your initial supervisory position?

Most people rated their preparation in the mid to low end of the scale that ranged from "totally unprepared" to "totally prepared" (0% entries). The averaged score of 41% indicates most people rated this question between "totally unprepared" and "adequately prepared". Comments provided in the survey supported these scores and one generally summarized the lower overall scores by writing, *"It was Baptism by fire: sink or swim"*.

2. Continuing Education: How would you rate the level of continuing

education in leadership and supervision you receive?

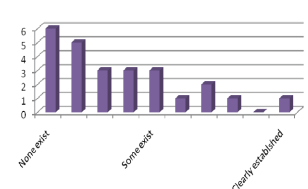
Scores in this area had a wide range with the majority in the middle, "adequate quantity/quality" of continuing education. There was a wide range on either side of this rating with an overall score of 51%. Continuing education appears to be situational to some degree driven by self motivation. Several comments reflected a similar impression to, *"Plenty available if one has the time to research and take it"*.

Where we receive our training was relatively distributed with most of our training NPS specific (35%). Only 16% of our training is received from the private sector.

3. Promotion Standards: Are standards for promotion clearly established and understood?

Responses to this question were almost exclusively on the lower end with an overall score of 36% (the range was "none exist" to "clearly established"). Comments were consistent with varying degrees of expression ranging from, *"What? This question makes me chuckle!"* to perhaps a more clinical analysis, *"I believe the National Park Service can do a better job of this"*.

Standards for Promotion



4. Initial Job Confidence: How confident were you within the first year of carrying out the requirements of your first Chief Ranger position?

This was another bell curve

The 2012 Chief Ranger Training (possibly...) by Dave Horne

response with a wide range of responses, but most were somewhere in the middle. Most comments attributed their confidence to the presence of mentors who prepared them for supervision and management. The following comment is fairly representative of this sentiment, "I had good mentors and people to turn to for advice. If it were not for them, I would have felt a little lost and not as confident". Mentorship was by far the primary source of initial Chief Ranger confidence (overall score was 54%).

There are obvious challenges reflected in this survey; however, this data also presents opportunities and a method for us to track improvements over time. Our intent is to contribute to improving these scores through efforts like the Chief Ranger's Training and the Chief Ranger's Handbook.

2012 Training Objectives

The survey asked open ended questions requesting input on the upcoming training and the results were phenomenal. There were many ideas ranging from very broad to very specific. We attempted to develop training objectives based on the general theme and direction of the input.

A fairly representative comment answering the question, "What specific deliverable(s) would you like to come away with (i.e. resources, division plans, initiatives, priorities, etc.)?" was, "Knowledge of where the NPS is going with all facets, including LE, RM, Interp, etc. How do we keep our operations running in the face of depleting budgets, recruitment/retention difficulties, etc?"

The objectives of the 2012 training, based on survey results, are:

1. Develop skills required for continuous improvement of NPS operations and service through evaluation, vision development, planning, and execution.
 - Evaluation (operational assessment techniques)
 - Vision (mission and goal establishment)
 - Planning (basic elements of a planning, standards of performance and establishing success metrics)
 - Execution (plan implementation, evaluation)
2. Share information among Chief Rangers and Superintendents and develop best practices for operational and management challenges.
 - Recruitment and retention
 - Promotion standards
 - Marketability for advancement

Two high quality speakers are scheduled. They are Sheriff Douglas Gillespie, Chief of Police of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, and Alan Brunacini, former Fire Chief of the Phoenix Fire Department. Both will present their perspective on vision, planning, execution, and evaluation. They will also be paneled and available to answer questions. Other speakers within the NPS will also present and a detailed schedule will be released as soon as approvals for the training are established.

Summary

Preparation for the 2012 Chief Ranger Training continues and we are confident that the official request for this valuable training will be successful. Alternatives are being developed in the event the training is not approved. We will communicate the status of the training as soon as we have the information. In the meantime, we look forward to a very productive and successful training, and to continue this valuable tradition. Please feel free to contact the IMR VRP staff if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.



Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve

Successful Detail? by Karrie Davin

I recently had the opportunity to detail to Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve as the Acting Administrative Officer for six weeks. In my career with the NPS I have been a Ranger Activities Assistant, Personnel Assistant, and Admin Technician, just to name a few. These are all jobs that have given me the knowledge, experience & skills of what it takes to complete a fiscal year-end close out, however it's been years since I've been asked to

help.

So, was I a success? No, not alone! It's like being the quarterback of a football team, he alone can't score a touchdown. He needs his team mates (GRSA staff) supporting and providing coverage. His coaches (IMR Budget & Finance and IMR SHRO) providing the guidance, encouragement and plays necessary to win the game and be a success. I know that I couldn't

have had a successful detail without everyone providing coverage and I think it's a reminder that in the NPS we are not alone and our success depends on our co-workers!

A special thanks to team mate Rose Matthews, GRSA Administrative Clerk and IMR Coaches Jean Zichterman & Rebecca Snavelly for all your help and support!

***"A special thanks
to team mate Rose
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“The IMR successfully treated 92,537 acres through prescribed fire and mechanical treatments. This is more than 20,000 acres above any previous year on record (2009 - 70,814 acres).”

National Wildland Fire Plan—IMR Parks Set All Time Record of Success in Fuel Treatments for 2011 by Mike Davin

In FY 2011 the IMR worked through an extremely active fire season in the South (TX, OK, NM, AZ) and while supporting the elevated fire suppression workload also managed to treat more acres for fuels management than ever before. The IMR successfully treated 92,537 acres through prescribed fire and mechanical treatments. This is more than 20,000 acres above any previous year on record (2009 - 70,814 acres).

Here are success stories of fuel mitigations around Park infrastructure, mechanical and prescribed fire ecosystem restoration goals:

**No Structures Destroyed During Loop Fire Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico
National Fire Plan - Hazard Fuels Reduction**

At about 2:30 p.m. on June 13th, a report came in about a fire on the Walnut Canyon Scenic Loop Road within Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Employees from Carlsbad Caverns and neighboring Guadalupe Mountains National Park responded immediately in an attempt to contain the blaze. At the time, the fire was about three miles from the visitor center and heading in the direction of the main entrance road and other park facilities. Vegetation was tinder dry and easy to ignite because the park had not received any measurable precipitation for the past eight months and had baked under the hot New Mexico sun.

Pushed by a hot, dry wind, the Loop Fire spread rapidly. By 3:30 p.m., park management announced the park was closing and visitors were directed to leave. By 4:00 p.m., visitors, employees, park residents, and backcountry users were evacuated. The gateway businesses/community of Whites City was also evacuated.

Meanwhile with the wildfire

advancing, a coordinated effort was initiated to begin burnout operations and fire fighters and park staff stretched firehoses throughout the housing, maintenance, historic areas, and visitor center for structure protection. Fire fighting resources including volunteer and paid fire engines, aerial resources, and crews from around the region responded quickly. At 10:00 p.m. the Pecos Zone Type 3 (Eddie Tudor, IC) incident management team took over management of the fire.

Previous fuels treatments including prescribed burns along the Loop road and Firewise clearing around structures enabled fire management personnel to protect life, safety and property. The fire burned around the park's housing, maintenance, and historic district and renovated visitor center. Only the roof of an isolated outbuilding was partially burned.

The Loop Fire burned in Carlsbad Caverns National Park from June 13-16, 2011 in steep, rugged terrain. The environment consisted of Chihuahuan desert type fuels included juniper, brush, sotol, yucca, and grass. The cause of the fire is under investigation. The fire ultimately grew to 30,438 acres (8,261 acres within Carlsbad Caverns National Park, 13,960 acres on land managed by Bureau of Land Management, and 8,200 acres on state or private lands).

Cooperators included Boles Acres Volunteer Fire Department (VFD), Happy Valley VFD, Hondo VFD, Joel VFD, Loving VFD, and Otis VFD, Eddy County, Lincoln County, San Juan County, US Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, New Mexico State Forestry Division, and the Bureau of Land Management. Private landowner Joe D. Jenkins and Whites City also provided water, land access, and other support.

After the fire was declared out, a Burned Area Emergency Response team made recommendations that the park continue to implement mitigation of flash flooding concerns. While the fire changed the park's landscape dramatically, signs of re-growth show that nature will heal the area rapidly. For more information contact John Montoya, Fire Management Officer at (915) 828-3251 x 2801

**Recovery Act Project Reduces Hazardous Fuels in Oklahoma Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Oklahoma
National Fire Plan - Fuels Reduction**

In 2010, Chickasaw National Recreation Area awarded hazard fuels reduction contracts under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. A contractor mechanically thinned eastern redcedar and Ashe juniper in two portions of the park to reduce wildfire risk and maintain a more balanced natural environment. Although eastern redcedar and Ashe juniper are native to Oklahoma, they are extremely invasive. The two tree species create a wildfire hazard, displace other species from the natural ecosystem, impair local air quality by producing allergens, and contribute to the general decline of the local water table.



The Point Wildland Urban Interface Thinning *NPS photo*

The “Hunting Area Wildland Urban Interface Thinning Phase 2” project thinned redcedar and juniper trees to create a more natural forest in about 1,026 acres, in the northwestern corner of the park. In 2008 the park used



The Loop Fire threatened park structures. *NPS photo*



Defensible space helped protect employee housing (above) and the park's newly renovated visitor center (below). *NPS photo*



National Wildland Fire Plan—IMR Parks Set All Time Record of Success in Fuel Treatments for 2011 by Mike Davin

prescribed fire to clear brush and fire-prone trees in this area. This second phase of thinning occurred during the summer of 2010. A follow-up prescribed burn was conducted in February 2011 to reduce the fire threat from any remaining slash.



Hunting Area Wildland Urban Interface Thinning Phase 2 NPS photo

The “Point Wildland Urban Interface Thinning” project also thinned redcedar and juniper trees in about 925 acres along the north boundary of the Lake of the Arbuckles. This area was also treated with prescribed fire in February 2011.

The thinning projects at Chickasaw NRA were approved under a rigorous review of wildland fire management proposals nationally that meet key Recovery Act requirements: Addressing high priority needs, generating the greatest number of jobs in the shortest period of time, and creating lasting value for the American public. These projects also meet long-standing priorities under the Interior Department’s Wildland Fire Management program. These include increasing safety for firefighters and the public, reducing threats to homes, businesses, schools and other resources, conserving municipal watersheds, preserving natural resource jobs, and reducing air pollution and the effects of smoke from wildfires.

**Prairie Restoration Underway
Chickasaw National Recreation
Area, Oklahoma
National Fire Plan -
Fuels Reduction**

In February 2011, fire managers treated approximately 2,184 acres of Chickasaw National Recreation Area with prescribed fire. These burns were part of the final phase of a multi-month, \$1.4-million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) project to reduce eastern red cedar and restore native grasslands in the park.

The burns were conducted in the Point, Nature Center, Five Lakes and Upper Guy Sandy areas of the park to help reduce eastern red cedar slash that had been cut by a contractor in the fall and summer of 2010. Eastern red cedar creates a wildfire hazard, displaces other species from the natural ecosystem, impairs local air quality by producing allergens, and contributes to the general decline of the local water table. Under natural conditions eastern red cedar is limited by periodic natural fires.

The burns are a part of the National Park Service’s prescribed fire program to help protect local communities from the catastrophic effects of uncontrolled wildland fires while promoting the natural ecosystem’s ability to thrive. Prescribed fires improve forest health by promoting nutrient recycling, increasing habitat diversity, and reducing fuels that lead to unwanted, out-of-control wildfires. Habitat improvement from the fires will contribute to increases in species such as deer and turkey and thereby improve hunting opportunities. Residents near these burn areas also will benefit because the fuel from dead plant material that has accumulated over the years is reduced under controlled conditions. This significantly reduces the threat a wildfire would pose to people and property in and near the park. Thinning of the eastern red cedar will increase public safety by reducing the hazardous fuel load in the wildland-urban interface

and move the ecosystem closer to a natural state.

For more information contact Bruce Fields, Fire Management Officer at 806-865-3360 x426



Eastern red cedar creates a wildfire hazard, displaces other species from the natural ecosystem, impairs local air quality by producing allergens, and contributes to the general decline of the local water table .



The National Park Service’s prescribed fire program helps protect local communities from the catastrophic effects of uncontrolled wildland fires while promoting the natural ecosystem’s ability to thrive.



This eastern red cedar reduction project will open up views around the park, improve wildlife habitat, reduce wildfire hazard, conserve water in the Arbuckle Simpson aquifer, and reduce pollen levels.

***“Prescribed fires
improve forest
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National Wildland Fire Plan—IMR Parks Set All Time Record of Success in Fuel Treatments for 2011 by Mike Davin

Fuels Reduction Minimizes Monument Fire Impacts Coronado National Memorial, Arizona National Fire Plan - Fuels Reduction



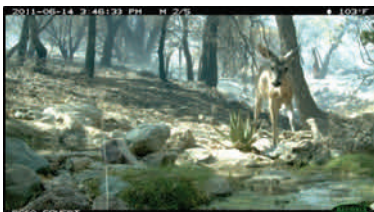
Monument Fire along Montezuma ridge (NPS photo / A. Ruiz)



The wildlife camera behind the visitor center picks up the first image of fire with firefighters in the distance.



The flames closer, yet a safe distance from the visitor center.



Deer drinking from the pond behind the Visitor Center soon after the fire passed.

On June 12, 2011, at approximately 1:15 pm, the human-caused Monument Fire started within the Coronado National Memorial, rapidly burning through the grasslands. The fire continued to burn through the park and beyond, eventually burning 30,526 acres within the Huachuca Mountains. Nearly 100% of the park's acreage was burned to some extent. Some areas burned intensely, but most areas burned with low to moderate severity. Because of the monsoon rains, by the end of August most of the memorial was very green with new growth of grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs.

To help protect buildings during the fire, crews cleared brush and fallen leaves from around the buildings and removed lower limbs of trees. Burnout operations were also utilized to decrease the potential of intense fire in the memorial and to protect the visitor center. These fires were set during times when the humidity was higher and the winds and temperatures lower. The burnout fires burned grasses, but many of the larger shrubs and trees survived in those areas. No park structures were lost. To view footage of the burnout operation behind the visitor center captured by the park's wildlife camera, visit <http://www.nps.gov/coro/naturescience/monument-fire-2011.htm>.

Mechanical fuels reduction and prescribed fire projects conducted over the past few years made it easier to plan and implement burnout operations to protect park structures during the Monument Fire. Recent projects included two prescribed burns in 2009. An eleven-acre prescribed burn was conducted to reduce fuels around park headquarters, park housing,

the visitor center and the picnic area; and a thirty-acre prescribed burn was done to reduce fuels near the private homes near the memorial's entrance.

The adjacent Coronado National Forest, Sierra Vista Ranger District, previously conducted a prescribed burn in March 2008 which included a portion of the park. Firefighters also used chainsaws to thin around park structures over the past few years, most recently in 2010, further helping to create defensible space.

The widespread loss of vegetation as a result of the Monument Fire increased the possibility of flooding and mudslides. The park has implemented post-fire rehabilitation efforts to minimize these impacts. Drainages have been cleared of downed trees and other debris, and culverts have been cleaned. This is an on-going project and will be repeated after every significant rain event.

On July 7, 2011, 0.54 inches of rain caused several washes in the park to flow, depositing about 6 inches of sediment over Forest Road 61 (Montezuma Pass Road) at one of the low water crossings. Trail damage included the loss of water bars (erosion control structures) as well as downed trees. The roads and trails are open to the public now that they have been repaired and known hazards removed.

For more information contact Denise Shultz, Chief of Interpretation at (520) 824-3560 x307

Fuels Reduction Work Conducted at Flagstaff Area Monuments, Arizona National Fire Plan - Fuels Reduction

On February 14, 2011, 108 acres of Firewise and wildland urban interface thinning was completed at Walnut Canyon National Monument. It was conducted

around the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)/Mission 66 historic Walnut Canyon Visitor Center complex, picnic area, front country trails, maintenance shop, employee housing, water/wastewater facilities, and utility corridors. The project area is dominated by relatively open mixed ponderosa-pinyon-juniper stands with mixed age trees; includes trees in the 24+ inch diameter range, which are habitat to various birds of prey, including Mexican Spotted Owl. The project was a collaborative effort between Grand Canyon National Park Fire Management staff, led by Dan Pearson, and Flagstaff Monument fire management staff, led by Charlie Strickfaden. This project was complicated by extensive above and below ground archeological resources which required mitigation and protection during the project. The contractor, Firestorm, Inc. through an Indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract, dramatically reduced fuels loading, while cooperating heavily to retain minimal disturbance and fuels load on cultural areas. Due to the number and size of sensitive archeological sites within the project area, extensive coordination and communication was required between the project archaeologists, the contractor, project inspectors, and the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). Though it occurred in the middle of northern Arizona winter conditions, limited snowfall allowed the project to be completed on time and within the budget allocated.



Defensible space at Walnut Canyon National Monument NPS Photo

National Wildland Fire Plan—IMR Parks Set All Time Record of Success in Fuel Treatments for 2011 by Mike Davin

In July 2011, the Saguaro Fire Use Module also assisted Walnut Canyon National Monument in thinning the area directly adjacent to the Visitor Center. The crew also worked at Sunset Crater National Monument, raking pine needles and moving dead and down brush away from NPS facilities.



Saguaro Fire Use Module raking pine needles at Sunset Crater National Monument
NPS Photo

For more information contact Charles Strickfaden, Fire Program Coordinator, Flagstaff Area Monuments at 928-526-1157

Fuels Reduction Helped Protect Gila Cliff Dwellings Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, New Mexico National Fire Plan - Hazard Fuels Reduction

The 88,835 acres Miller Fire started on Thursday April 28th, 2011 on the Gila National Forest, approximately six miles south of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. The remoteness of the Miller Fire along with warm, windy conditions prevented firefighters from accessing the human caused fire as it burned through steep, rugged terrain in the Gila Wilderness for several weeks. Early on, firefighters began planning and developing contingency lines around the Gila Cliff Dwellings and the small town of Gila Hot Springs.

In previous years, NPS fire management personnel had implemented a number of fuel reduction projects in preparation of a wildfire threatening the monument. The projects were designed to reduce hazardous fuel

loadings in and around archaeological sites and the trail leading to the Cliff Dwellings. The hard work seems to have paid off.

As the fire approached the monument, fire management and park staff implemented previously developed contingency measures to protect the cliff dwellings and other sites within the park, including 700-year-old wood features in the cliff dwellings.



Fire comes down Cliff Dweller Canyon

While the fire burned through both units of the monument, hard work by staff and firefighters, which included installing sprinkler systems in Cliff Dweller Canyon, protective wraps on exposed wood, and additional fuels removal around several sites, including the Cliff Dwellings and TJ Site, prevented any damage except the lower section of the down trail, which suffered severe fire damage. Four older Forest Service modular structures and the middle fork well house were destroyed when the fire burned through the administrative area on Monday, May 9th. A strong presence of structural fire trucks, sprinkler systems and firefighters prevented the fire from reaching any housing units, the visitor center, or the trailhead contact



A wooden ladder wrapped for protection

station and the shop areas.

Due to the nearly complete lack of moisture during the winter and spring, the extremely dry conditions the fire continued to burn for several weeks. The monument was closed for public safety for about three week while the fire burned through the area. The Miller Fire was inactive as of July 27, 2011.

As of early August, heavy summer rains in the upper reaches of Cliff Dweller Canyon continue to cause temporary closures of the down trail where the trail runs in the creek bottom and is washing out or covered with several inches to several feet of water for as much as several days at a time. A National Park Service (NPS) trail crew has completed assessment work. Rehabilitation on the down trail will begin in mid-August and is expected to take 3-4 weeks. Archaeology staff from the Santa Fe office of the NPS Intermountain Region will also be at the Monument over the next couple of weeks to conduct post-burn assessments at both units.

For more information contact Steve Riley, Superintendent at (575) 536-9416

Mechanical Fuels Reduction at Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona National Fire Plan - Fuels Reduction

In accordance with Grand Canyon National Park's 2010 Fire Management Plan (FMP) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), park fire managers have begun expanding the use of non-fire treatments to reduce hazardous fuels in the park's wildland-urban interface.

South Rim fire crews have completed several mechanical projects in 2011 including the 31 acre Market Plaza Thinning Unit

“Early on, firefighters began planning and developing contingency lines around the Gila Cliff Dwellings and the small town of Gila Hot Springs.”

National Wildland Fire Plan—IMR Parks Set All Time Record of Success in Fuel Treatments for 2011 by Mike Davin



Fire crews piled thinned vegetation near the Grand Canyon School NPS Photo

in the Market Plaza area, 48 acres in the School Thinning Unit near the Grand Canyon School, and the 13 acre Hopi Tower Thinning Unit surrounding the historic Hopi Point communications/lookout tower. Crews are currently working on the 48 acre Supai Camp Thinning Project just southwest of Grand Canyon Village.

Chainsaws were used to remove limbs and small diameter trees. Some slash was piled, dried and burned under the existing South Rim Prescribed Fire Piles Plan; some was chipped and used in the immediate vicinity to repair erosion caused by social trailing; some was chipped and scattered away from buildings and infrastructure; and the remainder was removed.

The purpose of these thinning projects is to safely create areas of defensible space that will aide in the protection of human life, structures and infrastructure in the event of a wildfire. Reducing hazardous fuels by thinning and limbing trees to open the canopy and removing accumulations of dead and down fuels, helps create and maintain defensible space.



Monitoring burn piles near Market Plaza NPS Photo by Michael Quinn

Standards for sizes and amounts of fuels to be removed during these projects were derived from the 2000 National Fire Plan, 2010 FMP EIS, 2006 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, and recommendations and concurrence from the Grand Canyon Inter-Disciplinary Team.

For more information contact Daniel Pearson, South District Assistant Fire Management Officer at (928) 638-7934

Residential Fuel Reduction Treatment Project Completed at Zion National Park - National Fire Plan - Hazard Fuels Reduction

Most of the fuel treatments work

that has taken place in Zion over the last few years has focused on the wildland-urban interface along the park's boundary. While these projects are justifiably considered priorities (some of them being identified as "focus areas" by fire management officials), the park cannot lose sight of interface areas within its own boundaries. Fire management personnel at Zion addressed this issue by recently completing a hazard fuels reduction project within the Oak Creek, Pine Creek and Watchman residential areas of the park.

The 20-acre hazard fuels reduction project consisted of the mechanical removal of material in and around park structures (many considered historical) that could pose a significant fire risk in the case of a wildfire. This project is developed and funded under the wildland-urban interface initiative (WUI) program, in cooperation with the National Fire Plan. The objective of this project was to create and maintain a defensible fuel break in and around park infrastructure within the residential areas. This project will not only aid the wildland fire crew in their efforts to manage wildfires but also the structural fire crew in their efforts to protect park buildings. This project is just one of several similar treatments planned for the next few years in areas of the park's interface.



Wildland fire personnel began work on the project in June 2011 and completed it in August of the same year. All residents were notified in advance of the project and the crew worked closely with them to try to accommodate any special needs/desires that they

may have, while still achieving the stated objectives of the project. Project treatment consisted of constructing a firebreak by removing most flammable vegetation within 30-100 feet of structures (exceptions were made for certain species and individual trees). This was accomplished with the use of mechanical equipment such as chainsaws, hand saws, rakes and brush/weed cutters. Treatments were accomplished so as to preserve the cultural landscape of the residential areas as much as safely possible. Material removed from the project area were either piled away from the structures for future burning or taken to a local disposal site. Follow-up treatments will be necessary to maintain the desired fuels level.



With the recent push to treat more acres in the wildland-urban interface, some parks may be overlooking their own interface issues. These interface areas, and the structures within them, are vital to the operation of the parks and to the millions of visitors who utilize them. Plans must continue to be made to address these park interface areas and insure that they too are protected from the continuing wildfire threats.

For more information contact David Eaker, Fire Communication/Education Specialist at 435-772-7811

ProRanger Update by Dr. Lavell Merritt

ProRanger San Antonio has achieved success in the accomplishment of the majority of its goals and objectives this past fiscal year. We have a solid foundation in the San Antonio College Department of Continuing Education. ProRanger San Antonio has a positive reputation within the Alamo Colleges and is a program sought out by students, staff, and faculty. We have an effective process for recruiting, training and placing students in summer seasonal park positions where our cadets have performed consistently at the highest levels. We have experienced the standard levels of attrition in a law enforcement recruitment and training program of 20% to 30% loss of participants. We believe this reflects the rigor and attention we place on the quality and consistent performance of our ProRanger Cadets in the classroom and while serving our National Parks during the summer season. Our success continues through the recruitment of our third cohort of ProRanger Cadets. If you think your park is interested and able to host ProRanger Cadets please send us an email requesting a host park self-assessment to Proranger@nps.gov. We will have several host park conference calls to communicate the requirements and expectations of hosting ProRanger Cadets during the summer season.



We are not perfect and one objective that has been illusive is earning Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation (FLETA). This is a crucial objective which we have redoubled our efforts to successfully achieve. During the Summer of 2011 the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) inspected the San Antonio College Seasonal Law Enforcement Training Program (SAC SLETP). FLETC decided that San Antonio College was not within the required parameters of meeting the accreditation standard of the FLETA in June 2011. The overall goal of the SLETP is to prepare graduates to receive a seasonal law enforcement commission, enabling the prospective ranger to become a sworn law enforcement officer with the duties and powers to maintain the peace, effect arrests, and carry a firearm. At the core of the SLETP lies the goal of preparing seasonal park rangers to perform law enforcement functions in areas administered by the NPS. The primary way in which this is accomplished is by providing the prospective ranger with the skills and abilities to effectively perform their role as stewards of park resources. The goal of the accredited SLETP's is to maintain an accountable curriculum and provide for highly trained and motivated individuals ready to become part of the NPS workforce.

ProRanger San Antonio is fully invested and dedicated to building, staffing, and managing the SAC SLETP through continuing to work very closely with the San Antonio College Department of

Continuing Education. We are preparing for the FLETC accreditation inspection in November 2011. October 17-21, 2011 the IMR VRP management team of Chief Ranger Billy Shott, Deputy Chief Ranger David Horne and Regional Law Enforcement Specialist Mike Archer will conduct an internal inspection of the SAC SLETP to prepare for the FLETC inspection in November. We are 100% committed to the success of fulfilling our partnership with San Antonio College and FLETC through implementing an accountable, consistent, rigorous, and academically sound seasonal law enforcement training program at San Antonio College. We will open our accredited SLETP January 23, 2012. The SLETP will run through April 27, 2012. We will offer another SLETP during the Fall semester every year forward.



San Antonio College has been a dedicated partner working with ProRanger San Antonio to achieve our mutual goals of providing the opportunity for college and university students to; learn about the NPS, engage in federal career development, have the opportunity to participate in ProRanger San Antonio, and to ultimately meet the challenge of becoming a US Park Ranger through motivated highly capable students earning a level II seasonal law enforcement commission through the SAC SLETP.



“At the core of the SLETP lies the goal of preparing seasonal park rangers to perform law enforcement functions in the areas administered by the NPS.”



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our monthly accomplishment reports into one, reviewing our customer survey results and using your feedback to adopt improvements, documenting FY12s goals and objectives, formulating a new budget based on priorities, and pro actively seeking input and concurrence from our leadership. It's a lot of work, on work, but we hope it will save us countless hours of unnecessarily having to manage the rest of the year and give us more time to provide the National Parks the best service and solutions possible.

We hope you enjoy this quarter's newsletter and find the content worthwhile. The theme of this newsletter is "Success" since we also realize that in reviewing last year's performance it's worthwhile to take pause and recognize individual and team successes of last year's work on work.

William Shott

Nominations now being accepted for the IMR Chief Ranger Excellence Award

by Karrie Davin

IMR VRP is accepting nominations for the *IMR Chief Ranger Excellence Award* until November 30, 2011. This award is a bi-annual award and began in 2010. Our first recipient was Grand Teton National Park Chief Ranger Andrew T. Fischer. We will present this years award at the 2012 IMR Chief Ranger's Training.



The *IMR Chief Ranger Excellence Award* is intended to recognize outstanding achievement in leadership development, risk management, and effectiveness.

The award criteria are:

- Active participation and demonstrated ability to mentor and develop their staff into future National Park Service leaders.
- Demonstrated proactive and collaborative approach to implementing Operational Leadership principles and appropriately managing risk in their operation.
- Demonstrated and documented achievement of park goals through cooperation and collaboration with the management team.

Nominations can be submitted by any employee, but must be forwarded by the Chief Ranger's Superintendent with an attached justification describing how the nominee has met or exceeded the above criteria (not to exceed two pages). Please send all award nominations to the IMR Chief Ranger (IMR_CRO@nps.gov) by **November 30, 2011** or contact IMR Branch Chief Dave Horne (303-969-2641) for any questions.





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