

BRANCH OF FIRE MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The Branch of Fire Management covers all aspects of the wildland fire program for the National Park Service. It is the only full-time staff dedicated to fire in the National Park Service, with the exception of a few personnel in five of the largest parks.

The office is physically located in Boise, Idaho, at the Boise Interagency Fire Center (BIFC) managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Administratively, the Branch Chief reports to Ro Wauer, Chief of the Natural Resources Management Division in Washington.

The Branch of Fire Management presently consists of six permanent employees, three of whom are part-time. In addition, there are 59 temporary employees associated with the Interagency Hotshot Crews supported by the Park Service as a share of that national interagency program. The major responsibilities associated with wildland fire are subdivided among four individuals on that staff.

David Butts, the Chief of the Branch, is the program manager with responsibility for coordinating all Branch activities. Dave is also responsible for policy, guidelines, and interagency activities, including agreements and coordination.

Robert Sellers focuses on fire management planning, suppression and prescribed fire. As a part of his suppression responsibilities, he supervises the three Interagency Hotshot Crews which are duty-stationed in parks throughout the System. Prescribed fire includes not only the actual prescribed burning, but also the associated fuels management and smoke management considerations. Robert also coordinates the fire overhead teams.

John Bowdler is responsible for the fire management training activities which includes curriculum development as well as coordination of instruction and attendance at national level training. Additionally, John handles fire-related equipment, air operations associated with fire management, and supplies and materials.

Scott Erickson is responsible for the fire prevention activities of the Service. Scott handles all fire-related computerized systems and coordinates the qualification and certification system for the Park Service in conjunction with the Forest Service. His largest responsibility is that of the development and operation of Normal Fire Year Programming (FIREPRO).

The specialists are supported in their activities by Tracy Sundles, Secretary, and Lynn Reyes, Clerk-Stenographer. Tracy manages the office activities, including general supervision of the timekeeping and coordinator clerk for the crews. She also handles all of the administrative support for the office and the crews themselves. Lynn provides assistance in general correspondence and office management and has the responsibility for the park files and films and training library.

The Branch of Fire Management provides national guidance and expertise on fire management. By locating it in conjunction with the four other land management agency staffs in Boise, the Park Service is able to capitalize on ready access to a broad array of expertise and depth in any particular speciality. The Boise location also enables the Park Service to stay current on the state of the art in this rapidly changing and highly technical subject area with a minimal investment in staffing.

The Branch of Fire Management carries out its functions through both written and telephonic communications, through the regions to the field. Correspondence is formally transmitted via the Directorate to the regions and field areas, and returned through those same channels. Subsequent informal accomplishments of activities that have been sanctioned through the formal process are then carried out with the regions and/or field areas. In addition, the office at Boise is linked by word processing communications to the Natural Resources Management Division for rapid generation of Washington Office correspondence. This is being significantly improved by the upgrading to two CPT computers.

In addition to communications capabilities, the four professional staff provide direct assistance, both to regional offices and to field areas, on a project-by-project basis. Depending upon the subject, this may be initiated at any level in the organization. Generally, it evolves from mutual communications on a given problem area and focuses on a specific park for the generation of a solution which then may be generalized to the rest of the system. All findings and/or guidance generated as a result of such a process are considered for refinement of the overall system through NPS-18, the Fire Management Guideline.