

## NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION BRIEF #6

### WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

Wildfires are defined as any fire occurring in forests, grasslands, swamps, or shrub communities. These fires may be either man-caused or natural ignited.

NPS policies require a Superintendent to take steps to manage wildfires in all parks that have vegetation which will support fire. Fundamental elements of this program are the Fire Management Plan (FMP) and specific management actions based on that plan. The complexity of these elements depends on several factors including the size of the park, the park's fire history, the availability of non-NPS fire suppression organizations, the nature of the resources at risk, and the interest of park employees. In some cases, a park's involvement is no more complex than developing a working relationship with a local fire company. In others, a park may have a very sophisticated fire management organization.

Here at Antietam, a modest fire management program has been established. That program includes the following activities:

- Fire Management Planning
- Fire Cache Operation
- Weather Station Operation
- Fire Danger Predictions
- Employee Training
- Fire Documentation
- Cooperative Fire Suppression

All of these activities are based on the premise that all wildfires will be suppressed. Present indications are that wildfire has not played a role in the natural systems of the park. This does not, however, eliminate the possibility of using fire for specific resource management projects (exotic plant control, historic scene maintenance).

Fire Management Plan - The first park Fire Management Plan was developed in February 1984. This was revised in the fall of 1984 and is presently being reviewed by the Regional Office.

Fire Cache Operation - A modest cache of fire fighting equipment is located in the park maintenance area. This cache contains hand tools, a chain saw kit, back-pack pumps, a portable pump, hose, and personal safety equipment. The park also owns a 250 gallon slip-on pump.

Weather Station Operation - A weather station has been constructed just south of the maintenance yard. The data collected from the instruments in the station is used to predict fire danger and fire behavior.

Fire Danger Predictions - Based on past weather conditions, we are able to determine if the chance of a fire occurring is low, moderate, high, very high, or extreme. This information is communicated to the public as a preventative measure. This prediction also triggers other preventative measures like additional patrols, closure of facilities, and restrictions on visitor activities.

Employee Training - All park firefighters meet once a month during January, February, March, April, September, October and November for training updates. Topics include hand tool use, pump operations, weather station operations, arson investigation, etc.

Fire Documentation - All wildfires are recorded on Form DI-1201. This allows the development of a Park Fire History.

Cooperative Fire Suppression - Because our resources are limited, we rely on the cooperation of the various volunteer fire companies in the area. We currently have a cooperative agreement with Sharpsburg Fire Company which needs to be updated. This will be done in the near future. Although we cooperate with these organizations, principle responsibility for response to fires lies with the park staff.

If you locate a fire on park property, please notify a member of the Visitor Protection or Resource Management Staff.

By: The Natural Resource Management Staff