



## Southern Area Type 2 Incident Management Team



**PRESS RELEASE; FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **FLATWOODS CREWS SUPPORT VIRGINIA FIRE**

**Suffolk, VA (June 24, 2008)** – Two crews from the 1.8 million acre George Washington & Jefferson (GWJ) National Forest near Coeburn, VA. are battling the Great Dismal Swamp Fire outside of Suffolk. The Flatwoods (FW) Job Corps Center (JCC) crews arrived on the fire last week, and are expected to spend a full 14 day assignment working to contain the 3,000 acre blaze. The crews were ordered to the fire by the Southern Area Type 2 Incident Management Team. Tony Wilder, team Incident Commander said “I’m proud of the crew efforts. The GWJ has a great training program.”

Crew Boss John Barker said “these young men and women are a key part of the forest and have been sent on many different assignments in the 32 years that the JCC has been in existence.” Barker, a veteran of the U.S. Forest Service, is also the FW Fire Training Specialist and Recreation Manager that oversees the JCC program.

The Flatwoods JCC has contributed approximately 870,000 hours of work supporting local, regional and national assignments. Each 20 person crew has members qualified in firefighting and other disciplines needed to support the incident. The other crew boss, Rick Meadows, who has worked with the JCC crews since 1989, is proud of the men and women representing the Flatwoods JCC. Rick said “these people complete the training program and then move into communities as contributing members of society.” On average, 89 percent of the crew members are accepted into union trade jobs at the entry level.” Meadows is the forest Director of Recreation Programs on the Clinch Ranger District of the GWJ.

Glen Stapleton, GWJ forest Fire and Aviation Staff Officer responsible for overall fire management on the forest said “the importance of the FW JCC can not be measured. The JCC provides highly trained, mobile and qualified firefighting crews to the forest, state and nation. These outstanding crews have also been sent on flood, hurricane, search and rescue and space shuttle recovery efforts.” “In addition, the crews are a great asset to the GWJ doing all kinds of work on the forest when not assigned to support incidents, including controlled burning” said Stapleton. Stapleton said that John Barker has “provided the leadership and dedication to the crews at the JCC. Barker’s outstanding efforts to train people to support national disaster efforts are unequalled.”

The men and women at the JCC come from various locations in the southeast. The program takes young people from 16 to 24 years of age and teaches them social, time and money management skill as well as work ethics 24 hours a day, seven days a week. After personnel complete the JCC program they have earned money to help them assimilate into society. Barker said that the young adults that continue as firefighters often move up into “Hotshot” positions and other management positions as they mature. The JCC program is a key starting point, but the firefighters have to be 18 years old to conform to National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) guidelines for wildland firefighters. Courses completed by some of the FW members include use of maps and compasses; first aid/CPR; fire engine operations; radio communications and use of chain saws.

###

**CONTACT FIRE INFORMATION:**  
**540-295-0389: Larry Helmerick**