



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fire Management Partnerships

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works collaboratively with other federal agencies, Tribes, states, local fire departments, private landowners and non-governmental organizations to improve joint stewardship of our natural resources, protect people and property and maintain healthy and productive ecosystems. The following are major components of our successful fire partnerships:

- Partnerships with local fire departments are essential to protect our National Wildlife Refuges. The fragmented nature of this land base means that our staff is dispersed over broad areas, and in some cases refuges have no suppression resources and no firefighters on site.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages 75 million acres of burnable lands, primarily national wildlife refuges, across all 50 states and U.S. territories. These refuges are surrounded by more than 700 communities. As development continues the need for prescribed fire and other fuels treatments increases causing the Service to rely more heavily on help from local fire resources.
- Our fire managers are called upon regularly to lend their expertise to partners. We gain reciprocal benefits from this, including mutual aid and technical support, for both planned and unplanned fires. We work with other federal, Tribal, state governments as well as private landowners that have fire management programs. Our collective fire programs manage all types of vegetation including forests.
- The Service is a member of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, a wildland fire guidance committee that includes the national fire directors and their staffs. It also supports the exchange of international fire professionals during times of significant wildfire activity.
- Our fire professionals provide critical support to national wildland fire preparedness and suppression efforts while effectively using fire on and off Service lands to reduce hazardous fuels as well as manage, enhance and restore wildlife habitat.
- The Nature Conservancy is an important partner on fire management projects. We each have a stake in enhancing ecosystems and managing hazardous fuels.
- The Service helps provide training to local fire departments under the programs directed by the Department of the Interior. This training represents a long-term investment in community fire protection by increasing operational safety, boosting cooperator preparedness and capability, and managing suppression costs.
- Service biologists provide essential consultation to other agencies conducting hazardous fuels reduction projects to ensure the protection of threatened and endangered species and their habitats.



Read about some of our partnerships ▶

Keeping Good Company: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have worked together for decades on fire management projects across the country. This partnership is effective on a practical level, with fire experts working together toward a common goal, and it also demonstrates the interwoven missions of both the FWS and TNC when it comes to fire on the landscape.

Here are a few examples of projects involving TNC:

- *DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge:* The FWS and TNC have worked since 1999 to do the groundwork it takes to restore the unique prairie ecosystems found in this 640,000-acre Iowa refuge. DeSoto refuge has partnered with TNC to establish a fully equipped fire program, including fire supply caches throughout the seven county area, a fully equipped wildland fire engine and a seasonal fire crew to perform burns on private lands.

- *Seney National Wildlife Refuge:* A project is underway at this Michigan refuge to collect data on FWS and TNC lands as part of the Joint Fire Science Program, a partnership of six federal wildland, fire and research organizations. The JFSP was established in 1998 to provide scientific information and support for fuel and fire management programs.

- The Service has developed a robust partnership over the past few years with TNC and the State of Virginia to apply fire where needed on each other's lands. This partnership has combined resources and expertise to put fire on the ground despite uncertain budgets and limited staff. Its creation also has helped other agencies and properties in Virginia.

Service Fire Pros Lend a Hand Down Under

Three U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fire program employees were dispatched to Australia in mid-January, along with more than 100 volunteers from other agencies, to assist with wildfire suppression and emergency rehabilitation near Melbourne, the capital of the State of Victoria. Each Service employee served a 30-day assignment.

Refuge FMO Creates Firewise Opportunity

When Carl Schwope heard that residents at Summer Mountain Ranch in Texas were concerned about potential wildfire destroying homes, he recognized it as a Firewise opportunity.

Firewise is a national program that encourages homeowners to create defensible space against wildfire.

Schwope, a fire management officer for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge, spoke to the community about prescribed fire and the possibility of doing some fuels reduction projects at the refuge-bordering subdivision. He met with interested landowners and after the initial four signatures, ended up with the cooperation of 34 landowners.

Three years later the community completed eligibility criteria and was formally recognized as a Firewise community in April 2006.

USFS Firefighters Offer Help FWS on their Day Off

When the U.S. Forest Service Black Mountain Hotshot crew decided to spend a well-deserved day off at Nevada's Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge Campground in June 2006, both the refuge and the citizens of nearby Alamo benefited.

The campground was in need of hazardous fuels reduction as dead trees known as 'widow makers' leaned threateningly over the road leading into the campground. The hotshot crew spent its entire day felling trees, then cutting and stacking the firewood. Then the refuge staff offered the wood to local senior citizens.