



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fire Management Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2013



Prescribed Fire, Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

provided by the

Branch of Fire Management
National Wildlife Refuge System
Headquarters Office, located at the
National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC)
Boise, Idaho

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NATIONAL SUMMARY

This report summarizes FY2013 accomplishments in the Fire Management Program for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) across its eight Regions and Headquarters office in the areas of personnel, wildland fire management, fuels management, training, communications/outreach, planning (including fire ecology and monitoring), and all-hazard response.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Nationally, the 2013 fire season was below the Service's 10-year average in terms of fire starts, acres burned, and number of fuels treatments. Compared to FY2012, the number of wildfire starts in FY2013 was similar, however acres burned on wildfires was greatly increased. Budget restrictions played a significant part in reducing the number of fuels treatments completed in FY2013. The total number of hours worked on fire-related assignments in 2013 went down by 9.7% from 2012; hours worked on preparedness and suppression went down 7.6%; while hours worked on hazardous fuels treatments went down 13.3%.

	FY2013	FY2012	10-Year Average
Wildfires	489 (down 1%)	498	507
Wildfire Acres burned	156,752 (up 62%)	96,860	635,769*
# of Fuels Treatments**	871 (down 41%)	1,463	1,812
Fuels Acres Treated**	210,374 (down 39%)	339,547	388,415
Total Hours worked	1,118,577 (down 9.7%)	1,238,862	N/A

Data from Fire Management Information System (FMIS) and Financial Business Management System (FBMS).

**The wildfire acres burned 10-year average reflects calendar year, not fiscal year, and is heavily influenced by 2004, 2005, and 2009 when the Service burned 2.1 million, 1.8 million, and .8 million acres respectively.*

***Prescribed fire, mechanical, and chemical treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and/or improve habitat.*

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Fire-related accident reports - 43 of 742 total Service accidents reported (5.79%)

Fire-related injury reports - 37 of 569 total Service injuries reported (6.50%)

Fire-related fatality reports - 1 of 4 total Service fatalities reported.*

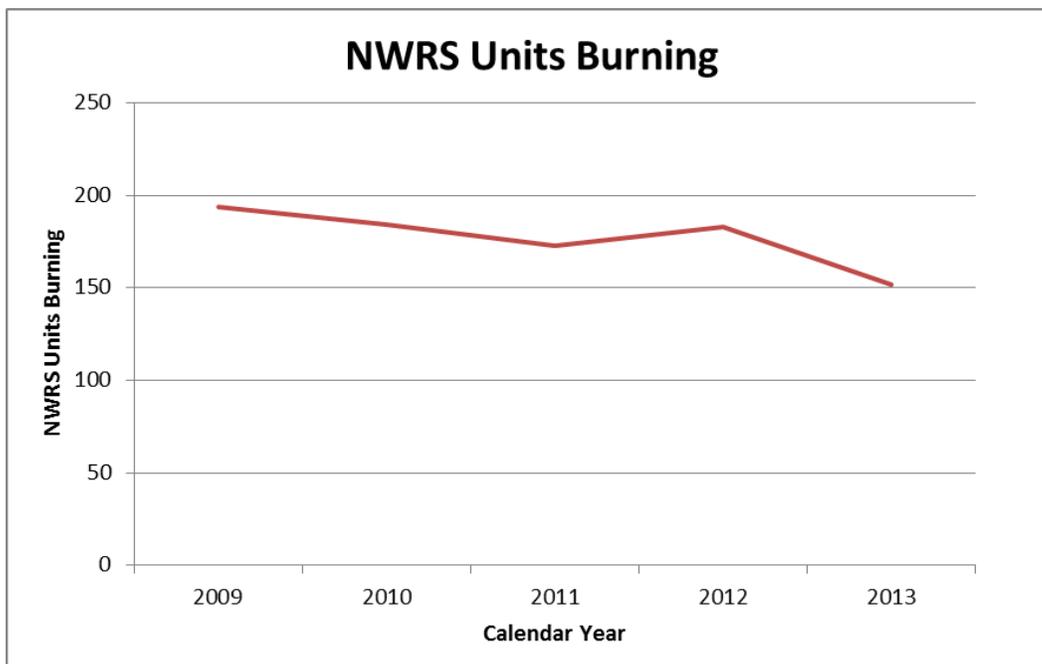
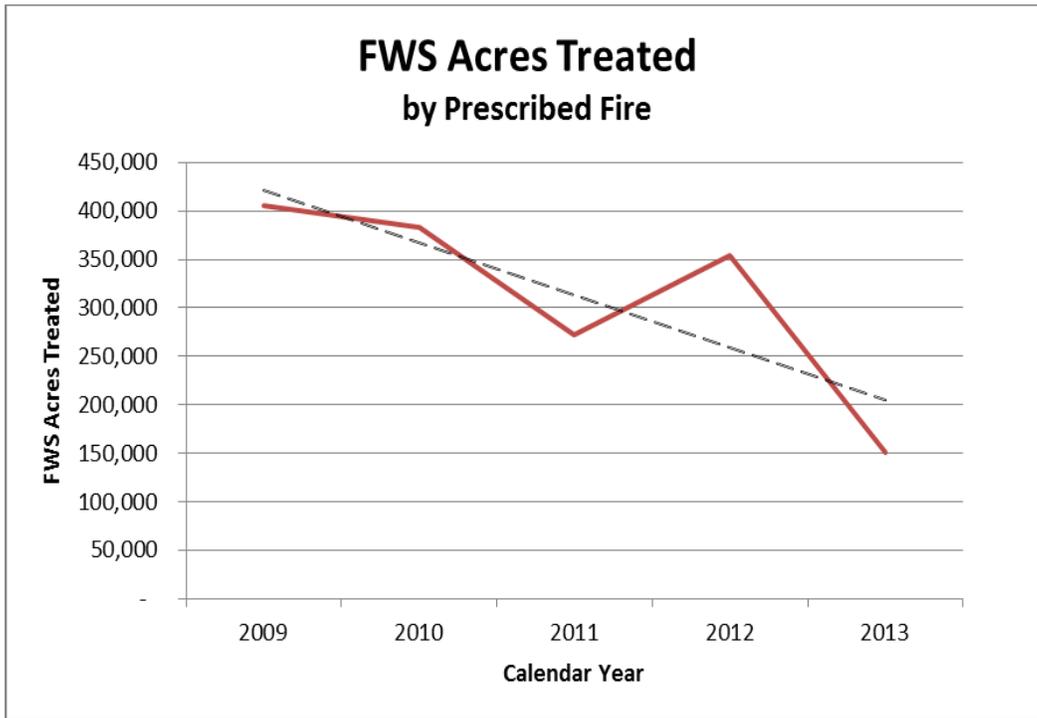
Data provided by DOI's Safety Management Information System (SMIS).

**One volunteer firefighter suffered cardiac arrest on a wildfire; zero fire-related fatalities for Service employees.*

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Challenges of declining budgets and reduced staffs led to opportunities of expanding new and strengthening existing working relationships with other stakeholders for reducing wildfire risk and protection of Service key values. A fire monitoring goal and associated objectives were identified in the Refuge System Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Initiative 7-Year Plan (2013-2020), which outlines how the Refuge System is implementing a nationally coordinated effort to support rigorous

inventories and monitoring at the refuge, landscape, regional, and national scales. Specific to this plan, much work was done in 2013 in regard to Fire History Atlas development (objective FM1.0) to document the legacy of fire history, providing spatial information about the location, extent, and frequency of wildland and prescribed fire on a NWR. In addition, the Service collected spatial data for all wildfire and prescribed fire incidents of 10 acres or greater in FY 2013, and uploaded the files into the Fire Management Information System (FMIS), to be updated annually.



Headquarters-Branch of Fire Management



Branch staff from left to right, standing: Lou Ballard, John Segar, Ted Patterson (IT contractor), Bob Eaton, Russ Babiak, Fred Wetzel, Cameron Tongier, Chris Wilcox, Cal Gale, Kevin Conn, Kaili McCray (DOI Medical Standards); from left to right, kneeling/sitting: Ted Mason, Billie Farrell, Andrea Olson, Amanda McNutt (STEP), Karen Miranda Gleason, Christina Haydon, Kim Van Hemelryck, Kathy Perez, Becky Brooks.

Branch Overview: The Branch administered the FY13 FWS Fire Management Budget (\$25.6M in Preparedness and \$19.6M in Hazardous Fuels) involving two Continuing Resolutions, provisions for automatic spending cuts per the Budget Control Act of 2011, and potential furloughs. The Branch represented FWS to the DOI Office of Wildland Fire (OWF), Interior Fire Executive Council (IFEC), National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), National Multiple-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC), and other interagency governance groups. Branch staff worked continually throughout the fiscal year with the National Fire Leadership Team, National Fire Operations and Safety Team, and the National FWS Fuels Team. Branch staff worked with the National Fire Data Team to ensure more complete and accurate FWS fire data focusing on building FMIS and GIS in FY2013. The Branch continued to supervise the DOI Medical Standards Coordinator position and fund the NWRS Smoke Management Specialist in the Division of Air Quality. Branch staff interfaced with refuge staff at Deer Flat NWR during a one-day annual Branch retreat, providing briefings on fire management and discussing a local case study of the CCP process. The Branch Chief and Operations & Safety Program Lead represented FWS at the Granite Mountain Hotshot memorial service in Arizona.

Personnel: Branch staff supported workforce planning efforts and preparedness funds allocation through ongoing workload analysis and categorization of refuges. Curt (Robert) Tjomsland filled the Office Assistant vacancy. The Fuels Specialist, Fire Planning Specialist, and Communication Coordinator completed details at Refuge Headquarters in Arlington, and the Administrative Officer completed a 4-month detail to BLM Boise District and Idaho State Office as an incident business specialist. The Budget and Planning Program Lead began the Advance Leadership Development Program (ALDP). Branch had detailer support from Regional and local specialists assisting in national efforts.

Wildland Fire Management: Development and testing of the updated Fire Management Information System (FMIS) was completed to simplify data entry, improve consistency/quality of data analysis, and incorporate spatial files. The Branch approved seven long-term severity requests for four Regions totaling \$729,746, with \$302,606 actually expended. The Branch approved four Emergency Stabilization projects in three Regions, totaling \$124,361, and 13 Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) projects in three Regions totaling \$1,396,337. The Branch managed the second year of the Service's Working Capital Fund, with \$545,212 applied to the account from 4 Regions; the total WCF dollars invested through 2013 was \$1.79M, with a total of 32 engines in the program and three engines ordered. Annual updates of the *Fire Management Handbook* and interagency "Redbook" were completed, and an interagency 5-year plan for Fire Facilities was finalized and distributed. Various Branch staff completed fire assignments in Command staff, Operations, Planning, Finance, and Logistics positions on multiple national wildfire incidents.

Fuels Management: The Branch provided Service input into finalizing the Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision Support System (IFTDSS) and the interagency *Prescribed Fire Implementation Guide*. The Service signed and updated an MOU with The Nature Conservancy to improve resource sharing for prescribed fire and other habitat management projects. The Fuels Management

Specialist completed a management detail with Refuges at the Southeast Regional Office.



Training: Branch staff held a number of webinars for Region and field staff on budget, planning, communications, fuels, prescribed fire, GIS, and data management. Branch staff also taught sessions at Refuge Academy, Wage-Grade Academy, and various interagency fire and leadership courses.

Prescribed fire specialist and Branch Geospatial Specialist Cameron Tongier monitors a prescribed burn to reduce invasive species at Bitter Lake NWR.

Communications/Outreach: The Branch facilitated national coverage of FWS fire program national and regional activities, including fuels success stories, SFMP development, and FWS fire history in various internal, interagency, and external publications and online social media. Refuges with the highest wildfire occurrence, and other units as requested by Regions, were added into the Inciweb system. Branch staff participated in hosting the Secretary of the Interior and other VIP visitors to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), and served hundreds of interagency colleagues during the FWS-sponsored NIFC Fall and Spring barbeques. The Communication Coordinator gave a public presentation at Deer Flat NWR on the 2012 fire season and a tour for refuge staff of NIFC; and completed an External Affairs detail with the Northeast Regional Office working on Endangered Species and Fisheries outreach.

The FWS Branch of Fire Management hosts barbeque for NIFC employees. *Pictured second and third from left: Operations and Safety Program Lead, Chris Wilcox; and Hazardous Fuels Specialist, Cal Gale; on the grounds of the National Interagency Fire Center.*



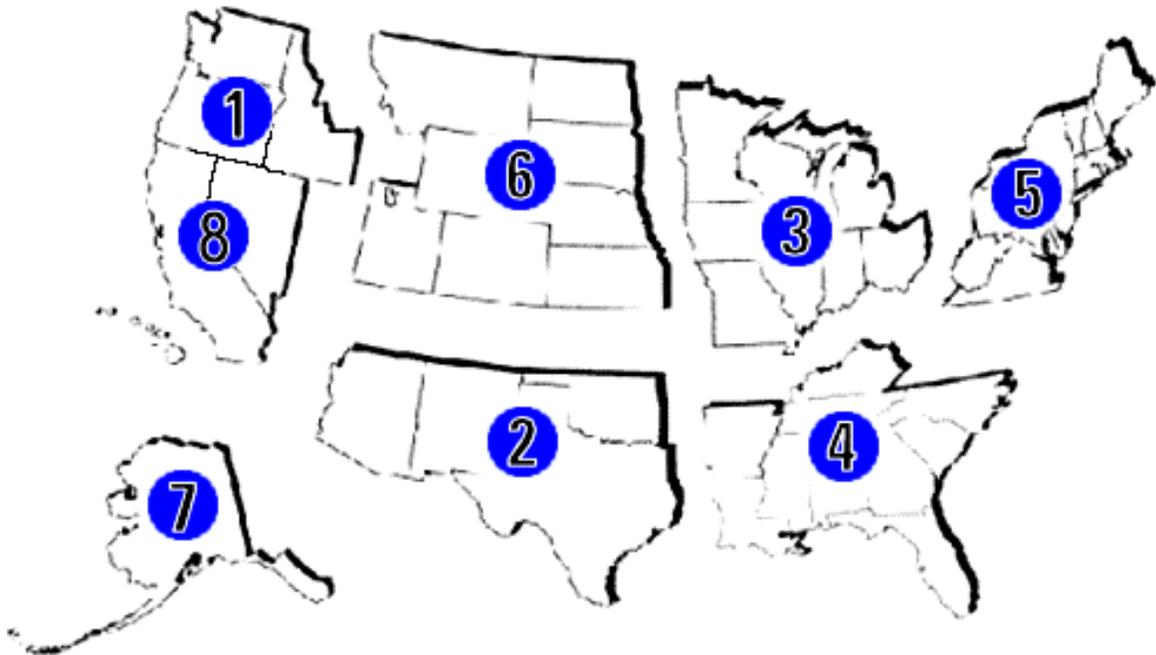
Planning: The Fire Planning Specialist worked with the interagency Fire Planning group to produce a national brochure on Spatial Fire Management Plans (SFMP); and participated with the Branch Geospatial Specialist on a team with Southwest Region, field, and interagency staff to support the first SFMP in the United States, on refuges in New Mexico. They also worked with fire staff to begin a second pilot on Wetland Management Districts in South Dakota and an interagency plan on the Massachusetts coast which will include National Park Service, DOD and BIA. All DOI agencies followed suit by initiating one or more pilot SFMP projects on their lands. Branch staff are also working with field staff to validate, correct and update LANDFIRE data.



All-Hazard Response: The Operations and Safety Program Lead assisted with the Galena flooding incident in Alaska. The Fire Planning Specialist supported Hurricane Sandy. Branch staff assisted in development and implementation of various FEMA, ICS, IQCS, and other all-hazard courses; and in the process of cross-validating fire and all-hazard qualifications and training.

Branch staff worked with New Mexico Spatial Fire Management Plan Project Team *(left to right):* Jake Nuttall (NM Fire District), Cameron Tongier (Branch); Jeff Manley, (NPS); Kari Gromatzky (Region 2), Becky Brooks (Branch), Ryan Whiteaker (Region 2), Jason Riggins (Wichita Mountains NWR).

Regional Reports



REGION 1 - Pacific Region



Pacific Region Fire Management Staff, 2013

From left to right, top: Lance Roberts, SE Idaho Zone FMO; Greg Hagedorn Western OR/WA Zone FMO; Doug Frederick, Inland NW Zone AFMO; Steve Pietroburgo, Inland NW Zone FMO; Shane Theall, Burns Interagency FMO; Brett Fay, Deputy RFMC; *bottom:* Thomas Skinner, Mid-Columbia NWRC, Zone FMO; Pam Ensley, RFMC; Betsy Schenk, Sheldon Hart NWRC Zone FMO, Brian Gales, Fire Operations; and Molly Cox, Data Management. Not Pictured: Andy Kikuta, Pacific Islands Zone FMO and Cyndi Sidles, Regional Ecologist/Fuels Specialist.

Regional Overview: [Region 1 fire management](#) experienced another year of challenge and success for its program. The four-state Region experienced an average fire season, having similar initial attack and large fires in comparison to the 10-year average on Service lands in the Pacific Northwest, Great Basin, and Pacific Islands. Our fire staff worked closely with local cooperators on Service and neighboring lands in an effort to manage the landscape holistically. This focus toward partnerships promoted an efficient and anchored management response to fire activities within the geographic area. These relationships allowed the Region to continue to meet the mission of having a successful fire management program with continued dedication to firefighter and public safety, conservation, and employee development.

Personnel: Working closely with management, the Region's fire program developed and is implementing a workforce planning strategy identifying critical fire suppression and hazardous fuels needs. The Region expended a significant amount of energy reducing its permanent and seasonal workforce to 31 employees (reduction of 15 FTE over 3 years) and continues to be served by 24 temporary firefighters, who are critical to staffing engines and filling in on interagency handcrews. In 2014, the Region will be utilizing retirements and seeking opportunities to place an additional 6 permanent fire staff whose positions are currently unfunded as a result of the out-year budget forecast.

Region 1, Pacific, continued...



Riffle Fire, Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge

Wildland Fire Management: Regional resources suppressed 48 wildfire starts on Service lands that burned 51,812 acres. The Riffle Fire at Hart Mountain NWR required a Burned Area Rehabilitation Plan for invasive species detection, control, and native seeding. In addition to refuge fires, the Region's eight staffed engines and overhead personnel responded to dozens of local support fires, as well as participated in large fire support across the western United States. The Region received approval for two long-term fire severity requests and approved 15 short-term requests in eastern Oregon and Washington, keeping Service fires at or lower than Type 3 complexity.

Fuels Management: The Region completed 76 fuels reduction treatments totaling 5,064 acres. Of this, 1,563 acres of NFPORS-approved acres were treated in the WUI and an additional 150 acres of NFPORS target was accomplished outside the WUI. The additional 3,351 acres were treatments identified and prioritized as mutually beneficial for hazard fuel reduction and habitat restoration. Interagency partnerships were instrumental in implementation of many of the prescribed fire treatments on Service lands.



Pile burning fuel reduction at Frenchglen, Oregon



Interagency S130/190 training, Guam NWR

Training: The Region hosted its first fire training courses in the remote Pacific Islands, putting on S130/190 for Department of Defense and collateral duty fire staff at Guam NWR. FWS personnel planned, coordinated, and provided leadership and oversight to critical initial attack response resources in a collaborated effort to reduce arson caused fires across the Island. In addition, Region 1 supported numerous Interagency training opportunities by instructing courses at the 100-500 levels.

Region 1, Pacific, continued...

Communications/Outreach: With limited funding; local units continued to highlight conservation and the importance of fire in resource management, its active role in the ecosystem, and our responsibility to prevent unwanted human caused fires. Complexes within the Region participated in school education events, county fairs, rodeos, Salmon summits, and routine interactions with the local residents and visitors who frequent and recreate on Service lands. Several Refuges have taken on a key role in providing applied field experience in resource management to higher education; providing direction/oversight, areas to conduct research, and opportunities to observe project implementation. Using social media, fire management continues to post photographs and highlight information onto its [fire Facebook](#) and the [regional Facebook](#) pages, as well as the [regional Flickr](#) page, where photographs of endangered species are now alongside, 108 photographs capturing fire management related activities.



The Western Bluebird participates in parade near Turnbull NWR.

Planning: All existing Fire Management Plans (FMPs) were reviewed and updated, four new FMPs were completed in western Oregon and the Pacific Islands, and several additional FMPs in western Washington and Oregon are in various stages of development.

The Region continues to participate in the Pacific Northwest Wildland Fire Coordinating Group, serving as Chair in 2013. Several individuals have played significant roles on various geographic area working teams. Region 1 led federal and state agencies in developing and implementing the northeast Washington NFDRS operating plan, which will be used as a template throughout the geographic area. This plan will increase the ability of fire managers and line officers to make planning and staffing level decisions based on quantifiable science and historical fire/weather data.

The Region continues to collect monitoring data for all hazardous fuels treatments, storing fire behavior, smoke dispersal, weather, and consumption observations in the FEAT and FIREMON Integrated database (FFI). The Region continues to train fire management staff in FFI database management; nearly every fire management zone now has a FFI data steward.

Fuels treatment perimeters with attributed information (linking to NFPORS and FMIS) have been categorized into the FWS corporate GIS database. This is the fourth year of geospatial data collection and will aid the region in moving toward spatial inputs in the latest update of FMIS. A Fire History Atlas was completed for Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. Continued coordination in 2014 will result in the completion of 6 more high-priority fire history atlases.

All-Hazard Response: The Regional Fire Staff spent time reviewing and making recommendations to the Regional Emergency Response Plan. This document was completed in draft this year.

REGION 2 – Southwest Region



Balcones Wildland Fire Module Completes 1000th Prescribed Burn for Habitat Conservation.

Back row from left: Rob Vernachio, Eric Krueger, Wesley Evans, Jeremy Edwardson. *Front Row from left:* Kevin Carter, Shawn Woodbury, Brett Idol and Carl Schwope.

Not pictured: Regional Fire Management Staff: Loren DeRosear, Regional FMO; Mark Kaib, Deputy FMO; Butch Wilson, Prescribed Fire Coordinator; Ryan Whiteaker, Fire Planner; Kari Gromatsky, Fire Geospatial Coordinator; Ralph Godfrey Fire Ecologist; Chuck Maxwell; Chief, Predictive Services, Southwest Coordination Center; Mary Blake, Fire Budget Lead; and Nancy Cunningham, Administrative Assistant.

Regional Overview: [Region 2 Fire Management](#) has been working through difficult times with approximately a \$5 million budget reduction over the last 3 years. Strategic workforce planning has been underway for 3 years and the Region has dropped from approximately 112 to 81 FTE's. Despite these reductions, reorganizing and reprioritization of work, the Region accomplished critical work, and is better prepared to meet future strategic fire and habitat conservation needs.

The Region had a moderate wildfire season overall. The hazardous fuels target of 28,347 acres was exceeded by completion of 40,249 acres (141%) of fuels and habitat improvement projects in FY-13. Region 2 continued implementation of 6 Burned Area Rehabilitation projects for a total of 1,177 acres. No significant lost time accidents were experienced by any fire personnel. The Region successfully recovered \$3.7 million in suppression assistance costs from the State of Texas. These recoveries will be used to offset future national and regional nonrecurring preparedness program costs. Our three primary budget program areas Preparedness, Fuels, and Burned Area

Region 2, Southwest, continued...

Rehabilitation were obligated between 99% and 100% for FY-13, with no over expenditures. The Region set another national standard this year by requiring FMIS GIS polygon data for all prescribed burn and wildfire perimeters. Capturing fire perimeter data on an annual basis will also facilitate the Region's Fire Atlas Project, Spatial Fire Management Planning, and Strategic Habitat Conservation. Please see the Region 2 Refuges [Fire Management website](#) for more information;

Personnel: Through strategic workforce planning, the Region has dropped from approximately 112 to 81 FTEs. The workforce has also been shifted to include more temporary, seasonal, and student conservation organization positions. Workforce planning also resulted in regional reorganization into seven fire districts, where the bulk of the wildfire and prescribed fire workloads exist (i.e. Texas Chenier Plains, Texas Mid-Coast, South Texas, Balcones, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona). The majority of the fire personnel are strategically located within these 7 Fire Districts, which account for all Refuges and Fish Hatcheries.

Wildland Fire Management: The Region had a total of 73 wildfires that burned 18,122 acres. Initial attack success rate exceeded 95%, with only four fires lasting more than 48 hours. At least 2 wildfires interacted with prior hazardous fuels treatments (e.g., Deep Fork and Texas Point NWR's), enabling more rapid suppression with fewer acres burned, less impacts to our resources, and lower cost.

Many District fire personnel participated on Incident Management Teams (IMTs), assisting regional and national large wildfire efforts, including the tragic Yarnell Hill Fire, where 19 members of the Granite Mountain Hotshot Crew lost their lives.

The Balcones Canyonlands NWR (BCNWR) Prescribed Fire Module conferred with both Regional and National Fire Management leaders to initiate and complete the process to convert and become certified as a Type 2 Wildland Fire Module (WFM), to better support ongoing regional and national wildfire management efforts. In August, the Module successfully completed a wildland fire assignment to the North Kaibab RD on the Kaibab NF and will be available for future wildland fire suppression and management efforts.



Balcones NWR Wildland Fire Module supports interagency fire. From left: Eric Krueger, Bret Beasley, Justin Forsythe, Andy Campas Rob Vernachio, Shawn Woodbury, Kevin Carter.

Region 2, Southwest, continued...

Fuels Management: Region 2 successfully conducted 105 prescribed burns for approximately 39,530 acres, with no escapes. These included 68 Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) treatments (29,022 acres), and 37 hazardous fuels reduction treatments (8,416 acres). There were also 30 prescribed burns conducted for strategic wildlife habitat enhancement, including 20 burns at Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR and several for Whooping Crane habitat at Aransas NWR, all for endangered species recovery and habitat restoration. The Balcones NWR (BCNWR) Wildland Fire Module conducted its 1000th prescribed burn.



Justin Forsythe of the Balcones WFM leads a firing operation.

Training: Nothing significant to report.

Communications/Outreach: The [Oklahoma Fire District](#) implemented a comprehensive hazardous fuels reduction plan at Wichita Mountains NWR in partnership with neighboring landowners and the bordering community of Meers to reduce the risk and threat of wildland fire on the east side of the Refuge. Six miles of backcountry roads were improved on the refuge to increase access and wildfire holding capacity, a 150 foot wide fuel break was constructed along three miles of the refuge boundary, and a 20-acre prescribed burn was conducted with members of the local VFD on private and refuge lands. These and future collaborative efforts with a positive community response will help reduce wildfire threats to this wildland urban interface community.

Planning: The Arizona Fire District initiated a Spatial Fire Management Plan (SFMP) and is in the process of working through the written documents and NEPA analysis. Region 2 continues to look for opportunities to convert standard FMPs to the spatial format. Annual spatial and tabular updates for the New Mexico Fire District SFMP were completed to maintain the currency of the plan and datasets. These updates reflected all treatments and wildfire activity occurring within the NM Fire District for 2013 and all proposed work for 2014. Map products and other presentation materials reflecting these updates will be distributed at the annual Refuge Project Leaders meeting held in December 2013. Region 2 collected spatial data for all wildfire and prescribed fire incidents of 10 acres or greater, that occurred within FY 2013, and uploaded the files into the new Fire Management Information System. Updates in the future will be completed on an annual basis. This standard is supported Region 2 leadership, along with the Fire Atlas Project to be adopted nationally in FY2014.

All-Hazard Response: A hurricane preparedness planning meeting was held via webinar in May and a follow up call was held in June to coordinate planning efforts among all coastal refuges in Texas. After these meetings each Texas refuge, the Ecological Services (ES) office and Texas law enforcement offices developed and submitted Hurricane Plans to the RO. This year there was a concerted effort to ensure all potentially affected FWS personnel were accounted for in the hurricane communications and planning. More information is available on the [Southwest Region Hurricane Information website](#).

REGION 3 - Midwest Region

Regional Overview: Region 3 experienced another year of continuous change. From budget uncertainty to wildfire to severe weather events, the year was full of change, creating new challenges. Nonetheless, the Region 3 fire management program continued its strong safety record.

Personnel: Workforce planning continues in Region 3. The FMO at Agassiz NWR retired. Fire staff left the FWS from Litchfield WMD, Glacial Ridge WMD, Detroit Lakes WMD, Crab Orchard NWR, and Windom WMD. Voluntary reassignments to Sherburne NWR and Minnesota Valley NWR were completed.

Wildland Fire Management: There were no significant wildfire incidents on FWS lands. The Region had 44 wildfires that burned approximately 1,500 acres. Numerous Regional personnel participated in national mobilization throughout the year.

Fuels Management: The Regional successfully achieved its annual fuels management target, completing approximately 290 treatments for 33,275 acres across the region. There was one escaped prescribed burn at the Morris WMD. Poor burning conditions prevailed over the entire region during the spring season. Late season snow and rain events hampered prescribed fire opportunities.

Training: Region 3 staff attended, instructed, and hosted numerous fire training courses including two interagency fire academies. More than 600 students attended the Minnesota Interagency fire training academy. The interagency Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) for CY2013 shows that 324 total FWS staff in Region 3 are fire-qualified: 259 people are rate as for arduous duty; 57 as moderate duty, and 8 as light duty. Of the 324 qualified people, our fire staff is 45 people; the rest are collateral duty; AD (contractors), and a few fire Temps. Note: Moderate fitness rating includes positions such as: RXCM, FIRB, RXB2, RXB3, STEN, STEQ, SOFR, SOF2, FEMO, TPOP, STOP, DZOP, FOBS.

Communications/Outreach: Community wildfire preparedness efforts continue throughout the Region.

Planning: Seney NWR staff, the R3 Fire Planner, and the Upper Peninsula (UP) Michigan Interagency FMO are participating in development of an interagency Wildland Fire Risk Assessment model for the UP of Michigan. The JFSP-funded [Lake States Fire Science Consortium](#) and newly formed [Tallgrass Prairie Oak Savanna Fire Science Consortium](#) have been a solid success; Region 3 is actively involved in both consortiums.

The [Northeast Cohesive Fire Strategy](#) effort consumed a great deal of staff time. Region 3 personnel continue to participate nationally and regionally in FPA, LANDFIRE, FWS Preparedness analysis, and the new version of HFPAS development and implementation. Jerry Szymaniak spends a great deal of time on these efforts.

All-Hazard Response: No significant events to report.

REGION 4 – Southeast Region



In late May 2013 the Southeast Region's fire leadership met at the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center outside of Newton, GA *Left to right:* Cass Palmer, Ed Christopher, Vince Carver, Pat Pearson, Bert Plante, Mike Dueitt, Shaun Sanchez, Vic Doig, Jon Wallace, Tony Wilder, Josh O'Connor, Pete Kubiak, John Mason, Mark Parker, Rob Wood, Matthew Johnson, Mike Housh, Reggie Forcine and Greg Titus.

Regional Overview: The Southeast Region's fiscal year (FY) 2013 fire season was a moderate year with a only a slight increase in fire activity from the previous year. Most of the wildfire activity took place in Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. This year saw a significant change in the reorganization of district lines, as District 3 FMO Mike Housh moved to Eglin Air Force Base. In keeping with the workforce planning efforts, the decision was made to absorb District 3 responsibilities into District 2 (SC) and 4 (N. FL). Service personnel participated in western suppression efforts as single resources or members of Incident Management Teams (IMT) during a very busy western fire season. With continued reductions in hazardous fuels funding this year the total acres managed through prescribed fire treatments dropped for the fifth straight year. Budget woes continue to challenge the fire program in FY2013. The FY2013 budget of \$10.13M represents a 10.3% reduction in preparedness and a 42.9% reduction in hazardous fuels funding from historic high levels. Most of the funding was needed for salary commitments but fortunately much of the Region's fixed cost had been paid forward and were able to send minimal support and project funding to the field. Everyone was encouraged to implement cost saving measures and prepare for FY2014 which is projected to be worse.

Region 4, Southeast, continued...

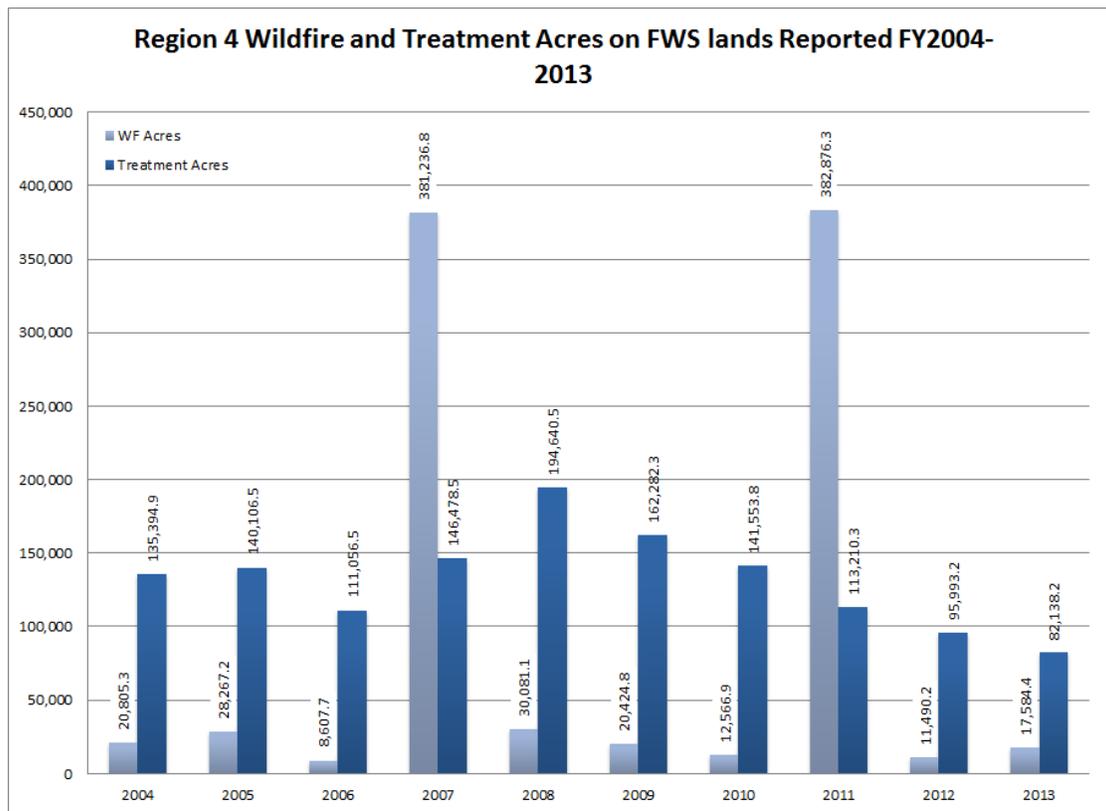
Personnel: Some of the personnel changes within the Southeast Region Fire Program were:

- Alligator River NWR bade farewell to its longtime DFMO, Tom Crews. Bert Plante was offered, and accepted, this important leadership position.
- Phil Weston the Regional Fire Planner retired at the end of December 2012.
- Mike Housh, DFMO for Okefenokee NWR, was selected as the Fire Management Training Specialist at Eglin Air Force Base, FL working for the Eglin Natural Resources Branch. This is a Fish & Wildlife Service position working cooperatively to provide assistance with fire management training and program development.
- Merritt Island's Forestry Technician Joe Sharbaugh accepted a position with a County Fire Department in his home state of Maryland in January.
- Eddie "Big E" Courson of South Arkansas/North Louisiana retired in December 2012.
- SW Louisiana's Larry "Gator" Smith accepted a position at the Daniel Boone NF in July 2013.
- John Bell of Mississippi Sandhill Crane accepted an engine position with BLM in NM and Mike Krebs accepted a job in August with the Jackson County Sheriff's Dept. as a school resource officer.
- Josh O'Connor was promoted to the Regional Fuel Management Specialist position.
- Sue Wilder Regional Fire Ecologist has changed duties and works 75% for Inventory and Monitoring and 25% for Fire Management covering Burned Area Rehab and Emergency Stabilization.

Wildland Fire Management: The fire season in the Region was moderate with a slight increase in fire activity from FY2012. Most of the wildfire activity took place in Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. Spring in central and south Florida was very active and both District 5 and 6 experienced record setting fire danger indices. We responded to 192 wildfires that burned 43,880 acres, of which 17,584 acres were on Service lands. Regional personnel also participated in western suppression efforts as single resources or members of Incident Management Teams (IMT) during a very busy western fire season. Districts 5 and 6 in Central and South Florida experienced a very busy spring fire season both on State and Federal protected lands. In March, Service personnel responded to several wildfires on FWS lands at Merritt Island NWR. Due to drought conditions some of these fires were long duration incidents. Because of fire activity and the extreme indices, the decision was made in coordination with cooperators, to request severity funding. The complexes were in severity for 4 weeks. Within those 4 weeks Service personnel responded to 11 wildfires for 4,927 acres, both on Federal Lands and assisting the State Lands. The severity resources provided the necessary personnel and equipment to assist the local staff with these fires.

Fuels Management: With continued reductions in hazardous fuels funding this year the total acres managed through prescribed fire treatments dropped for the fifth straight year. This fiscal year's target for acreage treated as determined through the HFPAS process was successful and the region accomplished 102% (25,253 acres) of the FY 2013 target. Around the region additional funds were used to help treat an additional 56,900 acres. These acres were accomplished in a safe and efficient manner, reduced hazardous fuel loading and helped to maintain the health of our fire dependent landscapes. During the sequestration many opportune days to conduct prescribed fires were missed because of funding limitations in March.

Region 4, Southeast, continued...



Training: We continued to coordinate heavily with our State and Federal partners concerning wildland fire and All-Hazard response training. Notable, is our involvement with the TN/KY Wildland Fire Academy. This year was the 11th annual session and our efforts were once again spearheaded by Mike Housh. Mike has served on the steering committee as the FWS representative since the academy's inception. Thank you to Mike and all the others for another successful year. Some of our field units, for example Merritt Island, hosted a variety of beginning to advanced level training courses at the home unit. They opened these sessions to cooperators and advertised them on the Southern Area Fire Training website.

The National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center once again managed to provide stellar training opportunities for their students, throughout the Southeast. Accomplishments were:

- **98** attendees participated during the January - June sessions.
- **32** individuals participated in FY13 Agency Administrator Workshop.
- Cooperators hosting PFTC were **43** (representing **9** agencies/organizations).
- Participated in **172** burns and safety sessions.
- Burned **70,279** acres, **26,079** acres treated in Wildland Urban Interface.
- **462** training assignments received, working on **7** different types of task books.

Region 4, Southeast, continued...

Communications/Outreach: Realizing that communicating, cooperating and coordinating with partners are the most efficient ways to accomplish the mission of the service; regardless of the budget climate, the Region continues to strengthen cooperative relationships with our partners via actively participation with interagency planning and coordination meetings, the Cohesive Strategy efforts, and developing agreements with new partners. An example is the Region's growing relationship with the U.S. Air Force, which is sharing resources to accomplish mutually beneficial goals across the southeast. Notable examples of communications, outreach and cooperation were:

- FL Panther NWR, Loxahatchee NWR, Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park worked together to develop essentially an interagency severity package. In order to make the most effective use of severity funding, they collectively identified a shared mutual response area and the resources needed to augment current staffing levels. This collaborative approach eliminated redundancy in resource allocation and enhanced response capabilities cost effectively by utilizing available suppression equipment currently on location. This interagency planning effort reduced overall DOI costs and eliminated redundancies, while effectively protecting life and property. A cost analysis for all three parties concluded that by working together we were able to save an estimated \$200,000 for April 2013.
- In light of the Granite Mountain Hotshot tragedy this year, South Florida Refuges hosted a "Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser" for the *Wildland Firefighter Foundation*. There was participation from: St Marks NWR, Merritt Island NWR, A.R.M Loxahatchee NWR, Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park, Golden Gate Fire Department, Florida Forest Service, East Naples and Ochopee Fire Departments. Project Leaders, Refuge Managers, Superintendent's, FWS/NPS Fire Staff, Fire Chiefs and many civilian volunteers all came together and helped support this event by cooking chili. The event proved to be a great success; they were able to raise over \$11,000 dollars all of which went directly to the Wildland Firefighter Foundation to help support the families of fallen wildland firefighters.
- Sam D Hamilton Noxubee NWR along with the Natchez Trace Parkway hosted a burning crew from AmeriCorps (NCCC) this past season to help with prep work and prescribed fire. The refuge is working with Mississippi State University to help with our burn program; qualified students would gain valuable training by volunteering on the refuge on prescribed fires.

Planning: Planning efforts have been focused primarily on maintain and completing minor updates to existing plans and agreements. Okefenokee and Alligator River NWRs were the only two that had significant revisions to their plans approved this year.

All-Hazard Response: In the beginning of this FY, many of our Service employees were assisting Region 5 with recovery from Super Storm Sandy. Sami Gray (IC) and Michael Good served on an intra-agency type 3 IMT to assist affected Refuges. Tony Wilder, IC of the Southern Area Red Team, along with many other Service employees, was tasked by FEMA to assist with national priorities in the storm's response. The Service held their annual hurricane preparedness meeting but luckily tropical activity did not do significant harm this year. Pete Kubiak, RFMC, is in his rotation as the Region 4, I-RECC (Interior Regional Emergency Coordination Council) Chair.

REGION 5 - Northeast Region

Regional Overview: This was a very difficult year to accomplish anything, due to uncooperative winter weather and budget uncertainties. Despite this, we managed to do good things for wildlife, help our partners with prescribed burns and assist with national wildland fire suppression efforts.

Personnel: Due to a declining budget the Northeast Region lost four positions. Regional fire planner Rick Vollick accepted a position as the Region's Emergency Management Coordinator. Fire Biologist Laura Mitchell accepted a position with the Refuge's Inventory and Monitoring program. We did not fill a dispatch position at the Northeast Coordination Center when it became vacant. Catherine Hibbard, Regional Fire Outreach Coordinator, is on long-term detail with External Affairs. Joareyn Hill started this summer as a Pathways Student in the Blackwater fire program.

Wildland Fire Management: Region 5 recorded 8 wildfires on Service lands for 230 acres and 100% initial attack success. Six fires were in the Maryland/Delaware zone (four on Blackwater NWR, one at Eastern Neck NWR, and one at Patuxent Research Refuge); and two were in the New England Zone, including one fire at Moosehorn NWR that interacted with a fuels treatment, and one local assist. We supported the western wildfire season with three Type 2 IA crews mobilized to Alaska and Montana many overhead positions on Type 1 and Type 2 Incident Management Teams and deployed 43 AmeriCorps firefighters who provided 4,839 fireline hours (prescribed fire and wildfire) for \$84,194 in salary savings.

Fuels Management: After the wet winter, we suspended all prescribed burning in March due to sequestration. Even with the late start we treated 4,954 acres on Service lands and assisted our federal, state and non-governmental partners in treating 2,424 acres on 15 prescribed burns.

Training: We provided instructors for wildland fire academies across the region. We held several RT-130 Annual refreshers for Service personnel and partners in all four fire management zones. In March we trained, pack-tested and red-carded 43 AmeriCorps firefighters.

Communications/Outreach: Blackwater NWR provided a tour of the Fire Management Program to Congressional Aides and also to the Service's Refuge Management academy this past year. We sent the regional fire display to Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge while exhibits were being completed for their visitor center and helped a newspaper cover prescribed burns in Mashpee, Massachusetts and NPR Science Friday cover fire whirls. We wrote fire stories for our regional blog on fire crew diversity, the Cohesive Strategy, and the hapless deployment of one of our fire crews to Alaska. The latter story was picked up by the Department of the Interior.

Planning: We developed a fuels treatment plan with a mixture of mechanical and prescribed fire for 400 acres of the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge partnership refuge to promote New England Cottontail habitat/pitch pine restoration as well as fuels reduction in a heavy wildland urban interface area. We made a major investment to complete the first spatial fire management plan for refuges and federal partners in Eastern Massachusetts, which is most likely the first of its kind in the east. Working on the Northeast Regional Action Plan for the Cohesive Strategy consumed a major portion of time this year.

All-Hazard Response: Staff supported Hurricane Sandy efforts in New York and New Jersey. The region stood up a Type 3 organization with assistance from Region 4.

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REGION 6 – Mountain-Prairie Region



Garrett Welch, fire management technician from Huron Wetland Management District (WMD) works with Kyle Kelsey, wildlife biologist from Madison WMD, in South Dakota.

Regional Overview: 2013 was a challenging year for the Region 6 Fire Program and individual employees as we all endured a 28% cut in Hazardous Fuels, a 5% cut in Preparedness, and an additional cross the board 5.1% sequester cut in Fiscal Year 2013 funding. These cuts to the 2013 budgets led to a DOI hiring freeze and the possibility of government furloughs within the Fire Program. In addition the proposed budget cuts in FY 2014, the anticipated elimination of Hazard Fuel funding in FY-15, and the October shutdown of the Federal government also created additional challenges. These uncertainties continue to create employment and job security concerns that affect many employees and family members. To help ease employees concerns, the Refuge Supervisors, in cooperation with the Fire Program, implemented a strategy to encourage and promote the transfer of qualified fire employees into non-fire Refuge positions. Through this collaborative effort, the Fire Program was able to successfully transferred 5 individuals from the Fire Program into vacant Refuge positions.

Personnel: These budget cuts, in combination with the proposed budget cuts in 2014, continue to decrease the Regions fire capabilities and staffing of the program. Strategic workforce planning efforts continue to be emphasized regionally and nationally as everyone recognizes the potential

Region 6, Mountain-Prairie, continued...

significant impacts of additional cuts in future years. Regionally, efforts continue to move forward in the rollout and implementation phases of the Region 6 Refuges strategic workforce plan.

The merger of the Western and Eastern North Dakota Fire Districts into the North Dakota Fire Management Zone also occurred in 2013 and two additional alignments are anticipated in 2014. The Region Fire staff prepared an NDC issue paper to identify alternatives for downsizing the North Dakota Dispatch Center due to declining budgets. Based upon this report and the consensus of all the interagency cooperators; a decision was made to not renew the dispatch center GSA lease, downsize the Center’s square footage, and eventually relocate dispatch into the New Dakota Prairie Grasslands Office in 2014. Operationally, the 2013 wildland fire season in North Dakota was significantly below average due to extremely dry winter conditions followed by late winter heavy snows, and an unprecedented abnormally wet spring with record precipitation, and cool wet summer. Locally, the North Dakota Zone fire season never really materialized, which made many of the resources available to support national suppression efforts. A total of 213 resource orders were filled by the Dispatch Center in 2013 to support suppression efforts locally, and nationally.

Personnel moves in the Region included: Jason Melin senior firefighter at Des Lacs accepted a new position as the Assistant Manager at Des Lacs; Darrick Ystass Fire Program Technician accepted a position with the NRCS in Minot; Doug Downs FMO of Western ND accepted FMO position with the BLM in Alaska; Joe Guariglia AFMO of Western ND filled the Maintenance position at Upper Souris; Andrew Schell a former SCEP student was placed at the San Luis Valley Refuge Complex; Andy Randall NDC Dispatch Center manager retired from the FWS; Jason Lura Fire Program Technician at Arrowwood transferred into the Chase Lake Maintenance Position; Charles Frohme Fire Program Technician at Huron WMD transferred into the Huron Maintenance Position and Rick Litzinger Fire Program Technician at Devils Lake accepted a new position with Ramsey County Department of Environmental Health.

Planning: Fire management Plans (FMPs) completed during 2013 include: Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWRC (includes Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR, Rocky Flats NWR, and Two Ponds NWR). In addition most stations completed required FMP annual reviews prior to the April due date. In addition to the FMPs completed, an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a Fire Management Plan was completed for Seedskaadee NWR. The Great Plains Zone continues to make progress in the development spatial FMPs for Eastern South Dakota with the completion of maps and the draft development of an Environmental Assessment. It is anticipated the EA should be completed in 2014.

Approximate individual zone totals are as followed:

Zone	# of Treatments	Acres Treated	# of Wildfires	Wildfire Acres
Sand Hills	2	10	1	355
Montana	8	3,394	9	90
Eastern ND	4	857	3	739.6
Western ND	17	2,795.2	2	276
Great Plains	14	1,467	5	150
Rocky Basin	2	304.3	1	.5
Mid Plains	23	2,778	9	128
(Total)	70	11,605	30	1,719.1

Region 6, Mountain-Prairie, continued...

Fuels Management: Many of the Zones were unable to accomplish their hazardous fuels treatments because weather conditions went from extreme drought to snowy, wet and rainy through April and into May. The up and down weather patterns was also a contributing factor in the one escaped prescribed burn the Region had in 2013. On April 25, 2013 the snow cover that contained the brush piles at Lacreek NWR rapidly melted and the weather prediction was for hot windy conditions in the next few days. The prescribed fire was converted to a wildfire on April 25th, 2013 in order to keep the anticipated escape on Fish and Wildlife lands and in the absence of an approved prescribed burn plan to do broadcast burning to contain the piles. The Unit 11 Escape Piles Fire consumed 355 acres of FWS lands and did not leave the Refuge. The numbers of fuel treatments completed in 2013 are down 63% compared to 2012 and the numbers of acres treated in 2013 are down 75% from the Region's 2012 accomplishments. The Regional 10 year historical average from 2010 is 221 treatments for 39,882 acres. This is a 71% decrease due to weather conditions and limited project dollars and is well below Regions long term historical averages.

Wildland Fire Management: The 2012- 2013 winter will be remembered as unseasonably dry across the upper Midwest with KBDI values reaching 500-700 across many of the plains states. Elsewhere most places in the mountain west experienced above average temperatures and near average snowpack for almost the entire region. The number of wildfires and the number of acres burned by wildfires were well below long-term historical averages due to weather conditions. Compared to 2012 the number of wildfires in 2013 is down 66% and the number of acres burned is down by 88%. Historically the Region' 10-year average wildfire workload on Service lands is for 41 wildfires that consume 14,115 acres. This is an 88% decrease in acres burned from our 2010 10 year average.

Training: Training courses offered this year were down from previous years due to travel caps and a shrinking workforce. The courses offered this year ranged from S-130/S-190, S-339 to Rx 301. Classes in greatest demand include S-212, firefighter refresher, ATV training, and S-290. Notable taskbook certifications this year include: Rich Sterry and Bill Waln completing their Resource Unit Leader (RESL) taskbook; Jim Forsythe completed his Division/Group Supervisor (DIVS) taskbook, Mike Hill completed his Prescribed Burn Boss 2 (RXB2) taskbook; and Luke Anderson and Dustin Plooster completing their Faller B (FALB) .

Communications/Outreach: The Regional staff also assisted the National Office by providing information for several articles in the FWS News. One article which helped commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Threatened and Endangered Species Act, focused on the success of a prescribed burn at Mortenson Lake NWR that was critical to the survival of the Wyoming Toad. Two other articles focused on the value of Geo-spatial management plans.

All-Hazard Response: During the 2013 fire season, Shane Del Grosso filled the role as Incident Commander Type 2 for Rocky Mountain Team A on the Big Meadows Fire, Collins Fire, Wild Rose Fire, Fairfield Fire, Red Canyon Fire, California North Ops Staging, and the Larimer County Flooding. Other accomplishments stemming from this include, the Incident Management Team (IMT) assisting Rocky Mountain National Park with the Big Meadows Lessons Learned Review, and the sharing of Lessons Learned from the Colorado Flooding with the State of New York Chief of Incident Management Team regarding integrating FEMA into the IMT.

REGION 7 – Alaska Region



Alaska Region Fire staff: *From left to right:* Brad Reed, Peter Butteri, Kristi Bulock, Doug Alexander, Lisa Saperstein, Ben Pratt, Jan Passek, Brian Haugen, Maureen Clark, Doug Newbould.

Regional Overview: Despite a warmer-than-normal summer, the Region had an average year in terms of acreage burned. FWS Fire personnel from Alaska and Boise as well as the BLM Alaska Fire Service assisted with the response to severe flooding in Interior Alaska in May. Work continued on fire plans for three refuges, the regional fire ecologist continued work on interagency fuel moisture monitoring, and managers continued workforce planning to meet future budget challenges.

Personnel: There were no personnel changes within the Region. The program, which had been managed jointly with the Visitor Service program, was placed under the administration of the Deputy Chief of Refuges. The fire ecologist served a 3-week detail as acting manager of Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, and the fire information specialist served a 7-month detail as Public Affairs Officer with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

Wildland Fire Management: The season got off to a slow start, as spring arrived late in most of the state. However, the late snow and colder-than-normal temperatures were followed quickly by record high temperatures. Fire conditions became extreme in short order, but a lack of lightning kept ignitions in check. Alaska moved into Preparedness Level 4 twice during the 2013 season. Statewide, 601 fires burned 1.3 million acres – about average; 34 were started on FWS land. Two of these fires were human caused while the rest were ignited by lightning. Three additional fires
Region 7 – Alaska, continued...

Region 7 – Alaska, continued...

started within other jurisdictions and moved onto FWS land. Total FWS acreage burned was about average at 108,236. Most of the fires were in areas where no resources were threatened and, as a result, they were simply monitored in accordance with the Limited Fire Management Option. The largest fire on FWS land in the Alaska Region was the Little Mud Fire, which began June 24 and burned 26,405 acres within the Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge. Structure protection measures were taken when the fire threatened a residence and numerous cabins.

An international incident management organization was put in place to manage the Chisana River Fire in order to protect the community of Beaver Creek, Yukon, Canada. The Chisana River Fire began on Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge May 31 and spread to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The fire burned approximately 46,637 acres with 11,075 of those acres on FWS lands and never made it to the Canadian border.

FWS once again provided support to Alaska fire protection agencies. Six fire staff supported the Alaska Incident Management Team (IMT) on two incidents. In addition, six fire staff provided operational support on fires. The Region also supported the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center with a MAC Coordinator, Public Information Officer, and with fire modeling and WFDSS decision support.

FMOs and refuge managers attended the annual spring Interagency IMT meeting and FMO meeting. The Southwest Area FMO was part of the planning committee, developing and coordinating mini-workshops, while other fire staff participated as leads in some of the sessions. Regional and Refuge fire staff continue to participate in the AWFCG committees and chaired the following committees: Fire Research Development and Application, Fire Modeling and Application, and Education and Prevention. Staff provides representation on the Operations, Fire Weather, Smoke Management, GIS and Safety committees. The Regional Fire Ecologist served on the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee Wildfire Implementation Team and the FWS advisory committee for the Northwest Boreal Landscape Conservation Cooperative.

Fuels Management: The Region completed a total of 416 acres hazard fuels reduction. Among the projects, the Kenai NWR fire staff managed or collaborated on 3 mechanical treatments and 2 prescribed fires for a total of 356 acres. The regional fire ecologist developed a fuels treatment monitoring plan for Native corporation land adjacent to the Kenai NWR under a cooperative agreement between the State and FWS. Monitoring would focus on invasive plants and changes in vegetation over time to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. Within the Eastern Interior Fire Management Area, 3 mechanical hazard fuel reduction treatments were completed on 55 acres.

Training: Fire staff from Kenai and Eastern Interior Refuges conducted two chainsaw classes for FWS non-fire staff. Kenai students were from the Region's research vessel M/V Tiglax. The Eastern Interior class included students from 5 refuges. A total of 14 red cards were issued for all full-time fire management staff and 16 non-fire staff. Basic FFT2 training was completed for one employee at Yukon Delta, and three employees at Kenai NWR. Kenai Fire Management continues to support the refuge with training to maintain helicopter crewmember qualifications for fire and non-fire staff by conducting an S-271 Helicopter Crewmember class and by conducting refresher training for refuge HECMs. The AFMO and the Fire Prevention Technician both renewed their Interagency Aviation Trainer qualifications. FWS fire staff served as instructors for Interagency Classes, RX-410, WFDSS for managers – 2 session webinars, and live fuel moisture workshops in Fairbanks and McGrath.

Region 7 – Alaska, continued...

Fire staff also attended L-480 Fire leadership in the Wildland Fire Service as well as S-491. Region-wide, four taskbooks were completed and certified.

Communications/Outreach: The fire information specialist continued a communication effort about the natural role of fire in Alaska's boreal and tundra ecosystems. A poster explaining the role of fire was [translated into Inupiaq](#) – the second poster in a series. The program also worked with Alaska Department of Fish and Game to update a brochure explaining the relationship between wildland fire and furbearers, and worked with the refuges youth coordinator to complete a [video on campfire safety](#). Several fire-related projects were highlighted in Field Notes, including an article on [hazardous fuels reduction in Tok, Alaska](#); [the construction of a fuels break on the Kenai Peninsula](#); [an interagency fuels sampling effort](#); and [fuels sampling training in McGrath](#). The fire information specialist also worked with AWFCG partners to arrange media availability during Alaska Fire Prevention Week and used Facebook to link to fire-related articles in Field Notes.

The Southwest Area FMO was interviewed on KDLG radio in Dillingham concerning post-fire ecology of the Snake River fire, which occurred in 2012 in the Togiak NWR. She was also interviewed on KDLG during a period of high fire danger in the Southwest Area. In addition, she participated in "Connecting People with Nature" during the Iditarod Area School District's Mini-Iditarod Event and as served as a judge for the local science fair. The regional Fire Ecologist gave a presentation about the FWS fire management program to students at the University of Alaska Anchorage Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program.

Planning: The Togiak NWR Fire Management Plan was completed and signed. The Kodiak NWR Fire Management Plan was completed and is awaiting final review and signature. The Kenai NWR Fire Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed and is awaiting final review and signature. Preparation of the Kenai EA – the first for Refuge Fire Management Plans in the Alaska Region – was a collaborative effort between Refuge, Regional and National Fire Branch staff and a contracted NEPA specialist from Boise, Idaho. Annual fire management plan reviews as well as preparedness/dispatch plans were completed by FMOs. Progress continues at Selawik NWR on updating the interagency known-sites database. Arctic Refuge conducted a July review of their cabin protection policy, requiring an additional mid-season update to the refuge Fire Management Plan. The Kenai FMO represented the Refuge on the Interagency All Lands All Hands Committee, as a member of the Kenai Peninsula Fire Chiefs Association, and as a member of the Kenai Peninsula Borough's Local Emergency Planning Committee. Innoko NWR is a partner in the plan and offers one of the few safe shelters for the community. The FMO also participated as interagency partner in local CWPP/Hazardous fuels reduction project for McGrath.

All-Hazard Response: This year an abnormal annual break up of ice on the Yukon River jammed ice about 20 miles downstream of Galena, which is the headquarters for Koyukuk and Nowitna NWRs. The ice jam caused water to back up, [causing major flooding in the village](#). The FMO supported the flood evacuation as well as assessments and repair throughout the summer. The Fire Operations Specialist from Region 9 supported the efforts as Incident Commander for FWS in the assessment process. Local, state, and federal (FEMA) organizations responded and continue to provide relief services as residents rebuild. Discussions are underway for co-locations of Alaska Fire Service and FWS staff in the rebuilding process. Kenai Fire Management provided staff to manager the helicopter operations in the refuge wilderness clean-up project. The project removed approximately 8,500 pounds of refuse via sling loads from six refuge wilderness sites. The Southwest Area FMO participated in the Annual Flood Preparedness Planning for McGrath.

REGION 8 - Pacific Southwest Region



Pacific Southwest Region Fire Management Staff, 2013

From left to right: Lee Rickard, Southern California Zone FMO; James Roberts, Regional Fire Ecologist/Fuels Specialist; Dave Goheen, Klamath Basin Zone FMO; Jessica Wade, Regional Fire Operations Specialist; Peter Kelly, South Central Valley Zone FMO; Richard Hadley, Regional Fire Planner/Budget Specialist; Tim Rash, Nevada Zone FMO; Glenn Gibson, Regional FMO. Missing: Dale Shippelhoute, North Central Valley FMO.

Regional Overview: 2013 was another year of change, challenge, and success for the Region. Our fire staff continued to decline due to shrinking budgets. We continued to improve the integration between refuges and fire programs to limit the loss of capability. We had a very safe fire season with only very minor injuries in spite of conducting many thousands of hours of dangerous work.

Personnel: The Region developed and is implementing a fire workforce plan to reduce from 50 to 27 career employees. Working closely with Refuges and affected employees has allowed us to un-fund 21 of the 23 positions identified as unsustainable. This loss of over 45% has had innumerable negative consequences for the fire program and the Region. With reduced budgets in Refuges, Refuge and Fire managers on several fire zones continued to increase collateral duty capability.

Wildland Fire Management: California, Nevada, and Oregon all experienced drought and extreme burning conditions. Our resources suppressed 46 wildfires on refuge lands (1,906 acres) and responded to 53 local support (threat) fires (635 acres), for a total of 99 local fires. Regional staff also supported large fire suppression efforts in several western states and Alaska. The Region approved 12 short-term fire severity requests on 4 of our 5 fire zones but stayed well under the regional limit of \$300,000. Two fire required ES&R funding (Stamm and Fremont).



Initial Attack, Fremont Fire, San Luis NWR



Prescribed Fire, Stillwater NWR

Fuels Management: Region 8 completed 11 non-WUI treatments for 1,597 acres and 35 WUI treatments on 8,875 acres, including 55 prescribed fires. We had no escaped prescribed fires. Collateral duty personnel from the Refuges, Ecological Services, and Fisheries spent 225 days supporting initial attack, prescribed fire, and large fires.

Training: FWS Region 8 was lead agency for the California Wildland Engine Academy. Our staff planned, coordinated, and provided oversight to this intense, high caliber academy at the CAL FIRE training facility in Ione, CA, working with CAL FIRE and DOI partners. The Region also supported numerous interagency training opportunities by instructing courses at the 100-400 levels.

Communications/Outreach: The Region lost its Communications and Outreach Specialist. Prior to that individual leaving, several outreach efforts were ongoing with Central Valley Joint Venture and California Ducks Unlimited and will see limited attention until funding supports increased staffing.

Planning: The result of our fire workforce planning was a target organization that reflected anticipated funding as well as both national and regional priorities. Several Fire Management Plans (FMPs) are in development; the FMP is completed for San Luis NWRC with environmental compliance documentation in process; and the final draft for Sacramento NWRC FMP is currently under review. The Region continues to participate in the CWFCG and GBCG to facilitate interagency coordination efforts. We finalized guidance for FWS prescribed burning on private lands, which is now becoming the FWS national template. The Regional Fire Ecologist served as vice-chair of the FWS National Fire Ecology Team and chair of the FWS National Fuels Team for part of the year. The Region began developing a fuels treatment and fire effects monitoring framework and protocols based on new national guidance and templates. We continued to seek funding for a fire history study in ponderosa pine habitats at Desert NWR. Support to the refuges for fire effects monitoring was minimal due to reductions in funding and commitment to other high-priority tasks.

All-Hazard Response: The Region did not respond to any all-hazard incidents, but maintained qualifications and participated in training exercises, including oil spill response to ensure readiness. A draft regional emergency response plan was completed this year.

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