

National Fire Safety Award

Bart Rye, a prescribed fire/fuels technician at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, has been awarded the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual National Fire Safety Award. This is only the second year the honor was bestowed.

Rye was honored for his idea that fire crews carry Global Positioning System (GPS) transmitter collars, like those worn by his hunting dogs. The collars, first tested on the 70,000-acre St. Marks Refuge in spring 2014, allow fire line supervisors to more easily locate firefighters, vehicles and aircraft working on prescribed burns spread over large areas.

GPS technology allows a user to visually track up to 20 moving targets with distinct colors and symbols on a single hand-held receiver screen, with data refreshed every five seconds.