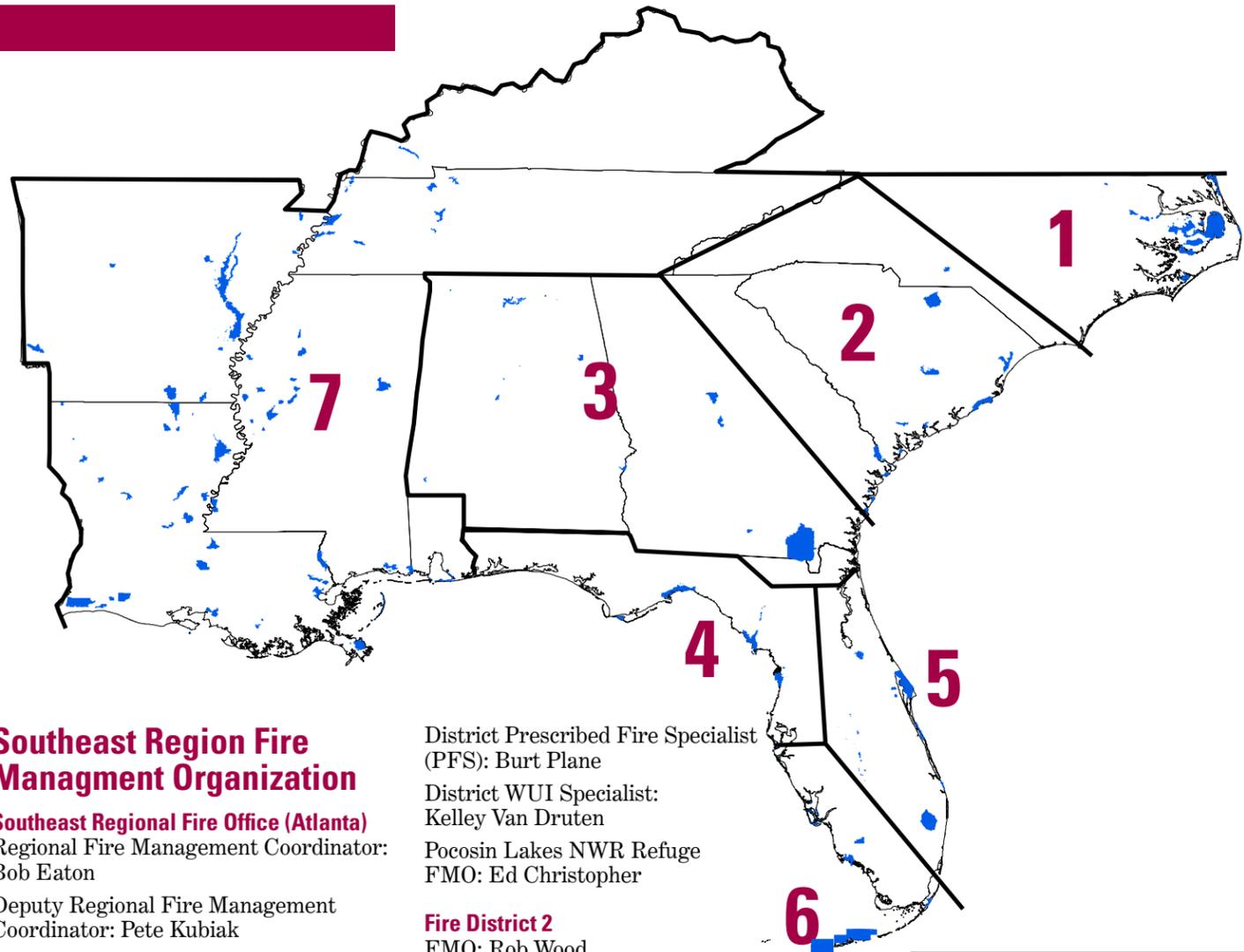


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# FY2011 Fire Division Report





**Southeast Region Fire Management Organization**

**Southeast Regional Fire Office (Atlanta)**  
Regional Fire Management Coordinator: Bob Eaton

Deputy Regional Fire Management Coordinator: Pete Kubiak

Regional Prescribed Fire Coordinator: Glen Stratton

Regional Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Coordinator: Rick Struhar

Regional Fire Program Assistant (Budget): Sherrie Matthews

Regional Fire Office Assistant: Margaret Hale

Regional Fire Ecologist: Vince Carver

Regional Fire Management Specialist: Josh O'Connor

**Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC)**  
SACC Assistant Coordinator: Pat Boucher

SACC Meteorologist: Kevin Seasny

**Tallahassee Regional Fire Office (TLH)**  
Prescribed Fire Training Center Director: Mike Dueitt

Regional Fire Planner: Phil Weston

**Slidell Regional Fire Staff (SLI)**  
Regional Fire Ecologist: Sue Wilder

**Fire District 1**  
Fire Management Officer (FMO): Tom Crews

District Prescribed Fire Specialist (PFS): Burt Plane

District WUI Specialist: Kelley Van Druten

Pocosin Lakes NWR Refuge FMO: Ed Christopher

**Fire District 2**  
FMO: Rob Wood

Savannah NWR District WUI Specialist: Keith Penrose

District PFS: Greg Askins

Carolina Sandhills NWR Refuge FMO: Mark Parker

**Fire District 3**  
FMO: Mike Housh

Okefenokee NWR Planner: Terri Jenkins

Piedmont NWR PFS: John Mason

**Fire District 4**  
FMO: Greg Titus

St Marks NWR District PFS/WUI: Jennifer Hinckley

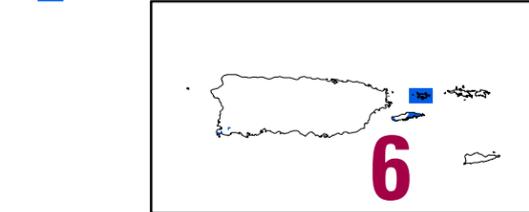
Lower Suwannee NWR Refuge FMO: Victor Doig

**Fire District 5**  
FMO: Patrick Pearson

Merritt Island NWR PFS: Michael Good

Wildland Fire Supervisory Officer: Rob Vernachio

ARM Loxahatchee NWR PFS: Jon Wallace



**Fire District 6**  
FMO: Cass Palmer

Florida Panther NWR PFS: Greg Suszek

Caribbean Islands NWR: James Padilla

National Key Deer NWR Fire Management Specialist: Dana Cohen

**Fire District 7**  
FMO: Tony Wilder

Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR AFMO: Sami Gray

PFS: Scott Saucier

Southwest Louisiana Complex FMO: Matthew Johnson

Southeast Louisiana Complex FMO: vacant

Noxubee NWR FMO: Paul Reynolds  
Felsenthal NWR PFS: Bobby Schat

**From the Chief,**  
*Southeast Region*  
*Division of Fire Management*



I would like to take a moment to share some of the success stories from the Southeast Region's Fire Management Program. From the Honey Prairie wildfire to the Pains Bay wildfire to the record setting dry conditions in Louisiana and Arkansas, the entire Southeast Region has endured one of the most active fire seasons in history. Despite the heavy wildfire workload, we still met our target of 62,000 treated acres. In addition to our target we treated additional acres in the wildland urban interface and improved habitat for numerous wildlife species.

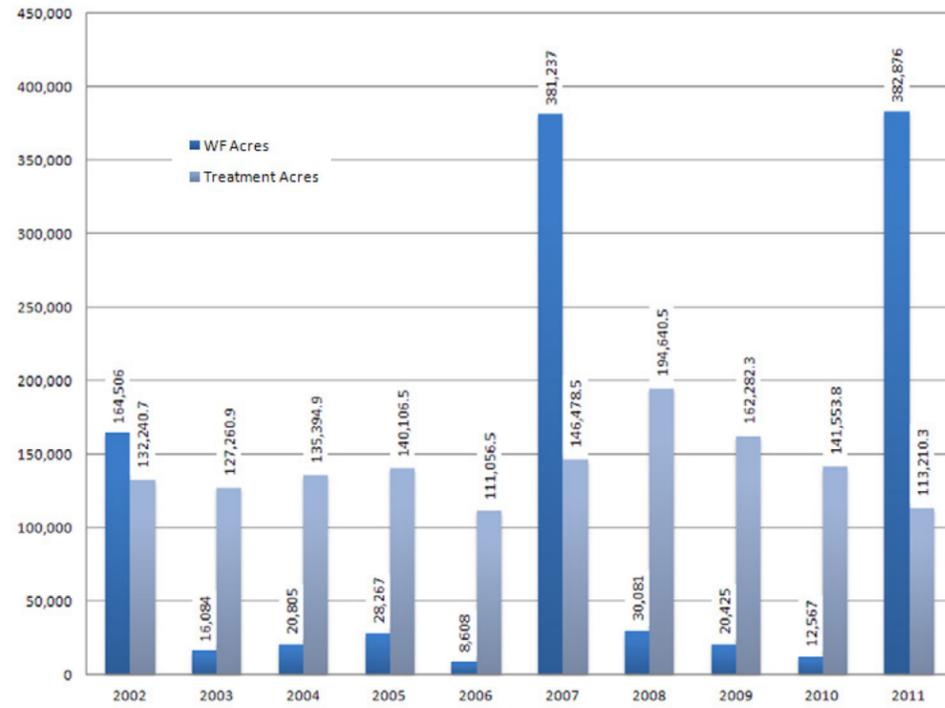
We are extremely busy all year round fighting wildfires and treating hazardous fuels and improving wildlife habitat through prescribed burning and mechanical manipulation projects. This has become the norm rather than the exception in the last dozen years and I don't expect much relief anytime in the future. Along with our fire activity workload, we are responding to more All Hazard Incidents (tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, etc.) which adds an additional workload to our constantly shrinking work force. The forecast for FY 2012 sounds very much like a broken record of the past several years and I expect that we will continue to be extremely busy for the next twelve months.

As the competition for federal budgets continue, we will face some huge challenges in the next few years. In order to be successful in managing our natural resources for the public, we will need to continue to rely on the strong "relationships" that we have previously built with our Federal, State and Local partners. We want to make sure that we are meeting their expectations and provide the best customer service that we possibly can. We will have tough issues to address but will always strive to do the "right thing" for the resource.

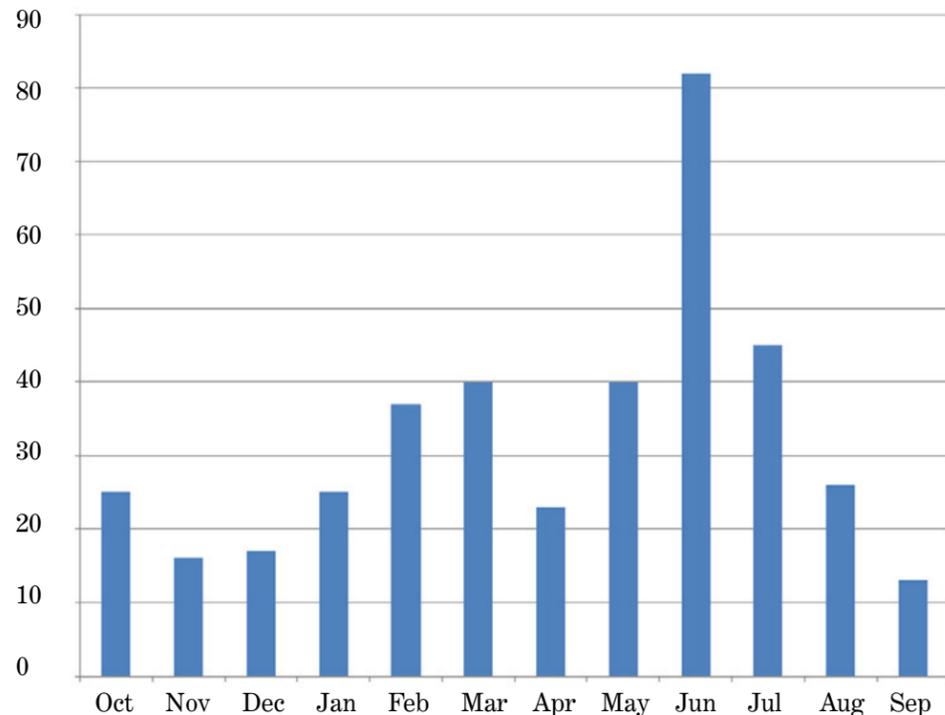
In closing, I would like to say "thanks" to a very dedicated Regional and Field Fire Management Staff as well as the assistance from all of the collateral resource/fire generalists of the National Wildlife Refuge System in the Southeast Region that worked extremely hard to manage these natural resources for all of the U.S. citizens. It is my hope that you will enjoy this journey around the Region and gather a better appreciation of all of the hard work that has taken place during the last twelve months.

# Introduction

Region 4 Wildfire and Treatment Acres on FWS lands Reported 2002-2011



FY11 Southeast Region Wildfire Starts



These numbers were taken from FMIS fire reports for Fiscal Year 2011 and show the number of new fire starts in a given month throughout the southeast region.

Fiscal Year 2011 Fire Reports by Refuge

Refuge Name	Fires
Alligator River NWR.....	14
Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR.....	3
Bayou Savage NWR.....	9
Big Branch NWR.....	19
Bogue Chitto NWR.....	2
Bon Secour NWR.....	1
Cabo Rojo NWR.....	13
Cache River NWR.....	2
Cameron Prairie NWR.....	4
Carolina Sandhills NWR.....	5
Cedar Keys NWR.....	1
Culebra NWR.....	3
D'Arbonne NWR.....	2
Egmont Key NWR.....	1
Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin NWR.....	1
Felsenthal NWR.....	5
Florida Panther NWR.....	9
Grand Bay NWR.....	16
Harris Neck NWR.....	2
Hobe Sound NWR.....	1
Lacassine NWR.....	3
Laguna Cartagena NWR.....	2
Lake Wales Ridge NWR.....	2
Lake Woodruff NWR.....	5
Lower Suwannee NWR.....	7
Mackay Island NWR.....	2
Merritt Island NWR.....	18
Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR.....	89
National Key Deer NWR.....	12
Noxubee NWR.....	1
Okefenokee NWR.....	36
Overflow NWR.....	7
Pea Island NWR.....	3
Piedmont NWR.....	5
Pocosin Lakes NWR.....	5
Pond Creek NWR.....	7
Red River NWR.....	1
Sabine NWR.....	11
Savannah-Pinckney NWR.....	4
South Arkansas Refuges Complex.....	1
Southeast Louisiana Refuges.....	2
St. Catherine Creek NWR.....	1
St. Johns NWR.....	23
St. Marks NWR.....	11
St. Vincent NWR.....	1
Upper Ouachita NWR.....	1
Vieques.....	7
Wapanocca NWR.....	2
Wassaw NWR.....	1
White River NWR.....	2
Yazoo NWR.....	1

# District 1

## Year overview - North Carolina Coastal Plain Refuges Complex and Mattamuskeet Refuges Complex

District 1 faced many challenges in FY11. Position vacancies and medical issues left the District short-handed in arduous firefighters. Funding constraints prevented the usual aggressive prescribed burning efforts that have yielded outstanding success in the past. The Pains Bay Fire started in one of the unburned units and spread across 24,004 acres on Alligator River NWR. Hurricane Irene topped off the year by cutting Pea Island NWR in half and damaging employees homes. Refuge staff, both fire and 1260 funded, stepped up where needed to keep District programs running and respond to emergencies at home and across the Region.

Some fiscal year highlights: A productive two week, District-wide Fire Review by the Regional Office was initiated in October 2010. Pocosin Lakes NWR hosted a field trip on March 25, 2011 for the Governing Board of the Joint Fire Science Program. The Board was especially interested in the effects of the 2008 Evans Road Fire on the organic soils and vegetation. The District hosted two SCA Fire Effects Monitoring Interns who were able to implement Alligator River's monitoring plan and start writing draft plans for two other refuges. Hurricane Irene made landfall in North Carolina on August 27 dumping 6 to 12+ inches of rain on refuges. The Region sent a Hurricane Response Team which helped stabilize a road and clear trees and other debris from roads and firebreaks.

### Wildfire

The 45,294 acre, lightning-caused Pains Bay Fire was discovered on May 5 and burned for nearly four months, finally being declared out on August 28.



FWS flex tracks attempt a direct attack on day two of the Pains Bay Fire, Donnie Harris/USFWS

The fire burned across the southeast portion of Alligator River NWR and onto the eastern half of the US Air Force Dare Bomb Range, with approximately half the acres on each jurisdiction. The fire was eventually contained in a joint jurisdictional burn unit (last burn March 2006) using a combination of indirect and direct attack suppression strategies. A major water handling operation was put into place to combat the extensive ground fire and keep the fire contained. This Type 1 fire had jurisdictional complications between three agencies (North Carolina Division of Forest Resources, US Air Force and USFWS), directly threatened the Village of Stumpy Point, and blanketed much of eastern North Carolina and southeast Virginia in smoke for weeks.

While the Pains Bay Fire was in full swing at Alligator River, the rest of the District went into severity beginning June 5. The refuges received almost no rain from April through June, scattered rain in mid-July and then more consistent rain by mid-August. The District 1 Summer Severity project did not end until Hurricane Irene passed on August 27. Of particular note was the Father's Day Fire in June that threatened Pocosin Lakes NWR. Severity and local resources responded just in time to stop the fire from reaching refuge lands, most likely preventing another large and expensive long-duration peat fire. Not counting the Pains Bay Fire, the District had a total of 2 false alarms, 1 assist fire, and 20 wildfires (13 during severity) on four refuges for a total of 253 acres.

### Fuels Management

The District accomplished 22 prescribed fire treatments on three refuges (Alligator River, Mackay Island, and Pea Island) for a total of 4,946 acres. Although we worked hard to implement prescribed burns on the two burn units at Alligator River NWR that received funding, only prep burns to black-line the fire compartment were accomplished. This compartment is composed of four units with very narrow burn windows due to smoke management constraints and environmental variables. The lack of timely funding did not allow burning of any other compartments at Alligator River or in the District except for the accomplishments noted above which came as a result of personnel donating time, taking compensatory time and, at Mackay Island, receiving overtime funding from 1260 (non fire) accounts.

The District accomplished 570 acres of mechanical projects on the refuges, primarily firebreak maintenance projects. A FY10 funded project to cut a new firebreak on Currituck NWR was completed in February. Unfortunately, the general unavailability of funding and the resulting logistical constraints kept the unit from being burned. With the mid-summer announcement of funding for mechanical projects, we were able to get FY11 contracts awarded for two firebreaks at Pocosin Lakes and maintenance of all the firebreaks at Cedar Island NWR. The majority of those projects will be completed in FY12. A chemical treatment was completed on one firebreak at Alligator River to test its efficacy for firebreak maintenance versus mechanical treatments.

# District 1

## *continued*

### District Staff Assignments

The District had four personnel assigned to Incident Management Teams, all from Alligator River NWR. DFMO Tom Crews (Safety Officer Type 2 Trainee), Forestry Technician Cory Waters (Helibase Manager Type 2 Trainee) and Visitor Services Specialist Bonnie Strawser (Public Information Officer Type 2) were all assigned to the Southern Area Type 2 IMT. Fire Program Administrative Assistant Helen Czernik (Cost Unit Leader Trainee) was assigned to the Southern Area Type 1 Red Team. The East Lake Operations Dispatch Office at Alligator River NWR

- Dispatched 26 refuge personnel on various assignments for the Pains Bay Fire.
- Dispatched and sponsored 23 ADs for the Pains Bay Fire.
- Dispatched 14 refuge personnel to various assignments with some being dispatched multiple times throughout the year.
- Dispatched and sponsored 11 ADs to various assignments with some ADs being dispatched multiple times throughout the year.

### Training

Note: All redcarded personnel attended RT130.

District FMO Tom Crews held an informal Initial Attack Incident Commander Refresher Training for District fire personnel this spring, stressing preparedness and leadership. With FY10 Ready Reserve funding, two District Volunteer Fire Departments received the NFPA training on Assessing Wildfire Risk in the Home Ignition Zone.

Two District fire management workshops were held for Refuge Managers and Assistants from Mattamuskeet, Pocosin Lakes, Mackay Island and Alligator River NWRs during the year, one in the spring and one in the fall.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Art Beyer	IS100, IS200, IS700, IS800			
Jordan Black	N9035, NSA02, RX301	S212	FIRB, HECM, ICT4	FIRB
Lisa Borel			BCMG, RCDM	FFT1, ICT5
Mike Canada			SECM	
Matt Carman	L180, S130, S190			
Tom Crews	RT300F	S190, RT130	OSC2, SOF2, SOFR	
Helen Czernik	S360	D110	ACDP, COST, EDSD, EQTR, IBA2, PTRC	
Anthony Davis			FIRB, ICT4	ENGB
Donnie Harris	RT300F		ATGS, SOF2, SOFR	
Matthew Howle	S133, S131, IS700, S290		FALA, FFT1, FEMO	FALA
Eric Meekins	RT372	S130, RT130		
Ryan Nordsven	S212		FALA	
Deborah Pierce	S190, N9052			
Kenny Powell	IS100	RT130	FIRB, ICT4	FIRB
Jon Powers	D110		FDUL, HEQB	
Sue Spry	D110		EDRC, RADO	
Jeff Swain		S130		
Brian Van Druten		RT130		
Kelley Van Druten	S491, RT300F	S130, RT130	ENGB, RADO	
Melvin Walston	S491, RT300F, MOICC	MOCC, RT130	TFLD	ENGB, FIRB
Cory Waters	RT372	S130, RT130	HEB2	

Topics discussed included fire management policy, prioritizing hazardous fuels treatments, organizational needs assessments, training needs, and the District Fire Review.

### Staffing Changes

District Prescribed Fire Specialist Greg Suszek took a position as PFS at Florida Panther NWR in October 2010.

Bert Plante, a 30-year veteran of the New Jersey Forest Service, was selected during the summer for the PFS position. He is expected to start at Alligator River NWR in early November 2011.

Pocosin Lakes NWR Fire Management Officer Vince Carver took a new assignment in December as Southeast Regional Fire Ecologist.

Firefighter/Equipment Operator Shepherd Rawls retired from Pocosin Lakes at the end of July.

Both Pocosin Lakes positions are currently vacant, but a selection has been made for the FMO position and is pending personnel action.

In addition to the two SCA interns noted earlier, Alligator River NWR also hosted a Fall and a Winter Fire Intern (four months each) as part of its Wildland Fire Internship program.

# District 2

## *Year overview-Savannah Coastal, ACE Basin, Santee, Carolina Sandhill, and Pee Dee NWRs*

Despite the challenges of budget shortfalls, dry weather conditions and increased wildfire activity, District 2 still had a productive year. The District has a history of active prescribed fire and to keep accomplishments up, we depended more than ever on help from local staff and cooperators to treat the priority areas.

We hosted detailers from the BLM's OJT training program and worked with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to expand our capability.

A new research project was added to help us get a better idea of management needs in maritime forests, particularly on barrier islands. The University of Florida partnered with Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex to conduct a tree ring study (dendrochronology) of Wassaw Island NWR. The study will provide a definitive picture of the island's fire history, as well as expand knowledge of historic climatology and hydrology of the island. Field work has now been completed and plans are in place to continue the project on neighboring islands next year.

### Wildfire

Wildfire occurrence was above the ten year average, but no fires went into extended attack. District-wide there were 13 wildfires totaling 708 acres. Of these fires, 10 were on refuge property and burned 205 acres of service lands. The District suffered from persistent drought conditions much of the year, but received just enough periodic rain to moderate the fire danger. On the barrier islands, two lightning start fires were caught while small, though neighboring state lands experienced two large island wildfires. The larger of these state fires being a growing season fire on Sapelo Island for over 4,000 acres (just across the tidal creek from Blackbeard Island).



*Bert Wyatt, Jan Tripp, Greg Askins on Rx fire at Santee NWR, USFWS.*

### Fuels Management

FY11 accomplishments were largely dependent on Project Leader's willingness to provide staff and funds. The District had a strong burning season with 11,180 acres burned across 66 units. While these numbers fall short of the 10-year average, they are very respectable for a tough year for weather and limited fuels dollars.

Carolina Sandhills NWR did not host a helicopter contract, but was able to keep the Okefenokee ship employed for several weeks during the spring burn season, completing priority burns on large units that do not lend themselves to hand ignition. Hand burned acres were near a record high this year taking advantage of every opportunity to treat priority acres. At Savannah NWR, fire was introduced into East Marsh for the first time in many years, reclaiming freshwater marsh under active management. Waccamaw NWR hosted a priority WUI burn on Sandy Island that was coordinated with TNC. The burn reintroduced fire into a block of longleaf pine that had not been burned in decades and was directly adjacent to the community on the island.

### District Staff Assignments

The District made staff available for assignment during a very active fire season in the Southeast. Many assignments were in support of neighboring FWS Districts and provided staff with excellent training opportunities. The District sent a steady flow of assistance to Okefenokee NWR for the Honey Prairie campaign, as well as to Alligator River NWR for the Pains Bay

fire. Wildfire support also went to Merritt Island, Mississippi Sandhill Crane, and South Arkansas Refuges. Bert Wyatt completed a tour with the Jackson Hotshot Crew in Texas and Andy Heisey served as Engine Boss on a FWS Region 1 Type 4 engine in Washington State.

Keith Penrose was instrumental in the success the Advanced Fire Academy at Chattanooga, TN serving as logistics coordinator for the two week event.

In addition to wildfire assignments, the District made a strong showing for hurricane response during the Type 3 deployment to North Carolina for Hurricane Irene. The District 2 taskforce was a mix of 13 employees from three refuges and a full complement of equipment and supplies. Once again, help from refuge staff accounted for much of the strength of the taskforce.

Refuge Managers also supported fire program needs by serving as resource advisors and subject matter experts. ACE Basin Refuge Manager Mark Purcell participated in the National Office's large fire cost review of the Honey Prairie and Pains Bay fires. Carolina Sandhill's Project Leader Lyne Askins is participating in the regional Fire-Habitat Priority Setting Team, which is tasked with prioritizing highest priority habitat needs into funding decisions (among the 30% of the fuels budget in which the region has some discretion). The team will report to Chief David Viker by December.

# District 2

*continued*

In addition to fire staff training, many other refuge employees are involved in the fire program. Without their help we could not accomplish nearly as many prescribed burns, particularly with recent budget constraints. Refuges also contributed non-fire staff for station assignments during this year's active season. Several Refuge Law Enforcement Officers were sent out on Incident Security assignments and other staff as Equipment Operators. Susan Heisey completed her certification as Public Information Officer and managed public outreach on a Type 3 incident at National Key Deer Refuge.

Keith Penrose continued the Ready Reserve training program by offering of several wildland courses to local fire departments. Four Wildland Urban Interface (S215) classes were taught across the District reaching many fire departments, cooperators, and service employees.

In August, the District hosted a two day regional Weather Information Management System (WIMS) and Weather Station Maintenance training at Savannah.

### Staffing Changes

The year held little change in staffing across the District with one exception at Carolina Sandhills NWR. Lead Forest Technician John Norton-Jensen moved on to the Grande Mesa National Forest in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Derrick Odegard from the FWS Morris Wetland Management District in Minnesota was hired to fill this vacancy. Derrick held temporary seasonal positions at Carolina Sandhills in 2007-2009 and was detailed to the refuge in 2010 and 2011 to assist with staffing shortfalls. This experience will enable him to hit the ground running.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Greg Askins	RT130			
Charles Johnson	RT130			HEQB, FIRB
Andy Heisey	S215, S233, N9035, RT130		ICT4	ENGB
Adam McCullough	RT130		HEQB	
Randy McLain	RT130		TFLD	
Dave Pafford	RT130			
Mark Parker	L580, N9035, RT130	RT130		
Keith Penrose	RT130	RT 130	RCDM, ORDM	
Matt Sutkowski	S215, RX310, RX340, RT130		RXB3	HMGB
Jan Tripp	S372, RT130	RT 130	HMGB,	
Bert Wyatt	S233, N9035, RT130	RT212	ENGB	FFT1/ICT5
Rob Wood	B3, RT300F, L580, RT130			DIVS

The seasonal crew this year at Sandhills consisted of: Tobey Bishop, John Davis, Dan Nielson, and Detailer Derrick Odegard, with Matt Kampf filling in as needed.

# District 3

## *Year overview- Okefenokee, Piedmont, Eufaula, and Mountain Longleaf NWRs*

This year can be summarized in a few descriptive words, and those words are: preparation, planning, outreach and education, cooperation, and the Honey Prairie Wildfire on Okefenokee NWR. Okefenokee refuge and fire staff had seen the signs many times before and with the 2007 wildfires still fresh in memory, preparations began early and addressed all areas surrounding the swamp. Working closely with the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Florida Forest Service, and the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners (GOAL), the Refuge and District 3 began a multifaceted approach to reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfire. For months, efforts concentrated on road and fireline reinforcement, helicopter dipsite inspection and construction, and strategic prescribed burning. On nearby private lands, state targeted fuel enhancement projects included prescribed fire, mechanical, and chemical fuel treatments.

In February, the District facilitated an Interagency Cooperator Pre planning meeting with Southern Area Incident Commanders and state cooperators. The focus of the meeting was to review items and "lessons learned" from the 2007 wildfires to better prepare for the forecasted probability of severe wildfires.

Working closely with GFC, District 3 fire staff conducted a wide ranging sweep of wildland urban interface areas adjacent to the Refuge. GFC and District 3 conducted individual Firewise assessments on all properties within a one mile radius of the Okefenokee perimeter and provided Firewise information to all homeowners. In many areas of the Refuge, this radius was extended to three miles from the refuge boundary and covered a four county, two state geographic area. Homes and properties within this zone were assessed for wildfire hazards, mapped, and triaged.



*Honey Prairie Wildfire burns across the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, USFWS.*

This information was then provided to local fire departments and IMT's assigned to the Honey Prairie Fire. As part of the outreach and education efforts, District 3 and GFC staff worked with county school administrators to provide Firewise information to every Georgia elementary student in Clinch, Ware, and Charlton counties. Public meetings were held in each county around Okefenokee NWR to alert the public to the severity of the drought and the elevated wildfire potential.

On April 28, all the weather and drought forecast probabilities were proven true. The Honey Prairie Wildfire began with a lightning strike. The fire continues to burn today and has consumed over 309,000 acres. Every fire resource has been utilized within the fire District, with most resources serving multiple tours. Hundreds of resources have assisted from FWS Region 4 and throughout the US. We sincerely appreciate all your help and support. And, unless conditions considerably change, we will need your continued support as Honey Prairie will quite probably burn the remainder of the year and into next spring.

Other cooperative effort s continued with excellent progress and include Piedmont NWR's annual cooperative meeting with the Oconee National Forest. Okefenokee NWR participated with its GOAL meetings, which include multiple private and commercial land owners, the Georgia Forestry Commission, Florida Forest Service, Cumberland Island National

Park Service, and the Osceola National Forest fire cooperators. The District once again supported and participated in the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council.

### Wildfire

The continued drought conditions made for an extremely active wildfire year, with the Honey Prairie Fire and Honey Prairie Complex continuing to be the primary focus of District 3 fire personnel. A total of 36 fires in the Honey Prairie Complex required a suppression response. Piedmont NWR also had an abnormally high occurrence of five wildfires on the refuge and KBDI's topping out at 792.

### Fuels Management

A very limited number of prescribed burns were conducted within the Fire District, primarily due to profound drought impacts. Okefenokee NWR was limited to 250 acres, and even the ever productive Piedmont NWR was down in prescribed acres, completing 15 treatments for 6,771 acres.

No other prescribed burns were conducted in the Fire District.

### District Staff Assignments

Largely due to the Honey Prairie Fire and Honey Prairie Complex, all District 3 personnel red carded have had at least one wildfire assignment. As mentioned earlier, most resources have been deployed multiple times, with excellent progress made on recurrency assignments and taskbook initiation.

# District 3

*continued*

A limited number of non Honey Prairie details were accomplished. Wildfire assignments that did occur off site largely focused on taskbook and recurrency needs.

Sarah Sorenson traveled to Texas for a FFT1 assignment and Robert Alonso served on a two week detail with Jackson IHC, completing his FFT1 Taskbook.

Judy Drury served as PTRC on the Hurricane Irene Response in North Carolina, and Terri Jenkins served on the R4 Hurricane Irene Response and Texas Wildfire Assist at SACC.

Beverly Derouin deployed with the Southern Area Type 1 Red Team to Shenandoah National Park.

John Mason supported the Texas wildfire response on multiple tours, and Matt Smith had assignments on the Osceola and Ocala National Forests, and to Sabine National Wildlife Refuge.

Despite the extremely busy fire year, we were able to get in some much needed and valuable training. With District 3 fire staff assisting again at the Tennessee Kentucky Training Academy, we survived and thrived during a snow filled training week at Bell Buckle, Tennessee. It was COLD!!

### Staffing Changes

Mike Ward, District Prescribed Fire Specialist, left Okefenokee January 16, 2011 to accept a position with the National Park Service in Atlanta as Regional Prescribed Fire Specialist. Congratulations and best of luck Mike – we'll miss you!

Nathan Gilmore, Forestry Technician Firefighter at Okefenokee, left in March for a position with BLM's Vegas Helitack Crew in Nevada. We wish Nathan well and again, we'll miss you.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Mike Housh	RX 510, Advanced Fire Effects	S230 ,S231		
Reggie Forcine	HELM Workshop	PLDO		
Art Webster	PIO		PIO	
Sarah Olscamp	PIO, S270			
John Mason	S330			HEB2
Brantley Boatright	RAWS			
Beverly Derouin	National Incident Procurement Training			
Carl Schmidt	Wilderness Resource Training			Wilderness Resource Advisor
Nathan Herron	S390			
Terri Jenkins	M410, WFDSS, Wilderness Resource Advisor	Wilderness Resource Advisor	EDRC, PETM	
Rocky Chesser				TFLD
Sarah Sorenson	RAWS, RX 310			
Tommy Crews	RAWS, S212, S270, PSDO, RX 310			
Robert Alonso	RAWS, PSDO, RX310			FFT1
Jamie Lanier	PIO			

Thomas D. Crews (not to be confused with the North Carolina Tom Crews) joined the fire staff early FY2011 as a Career Conditional Firefighter at Okefenokee NWR.

Robert Alonso joined the fire staff in January as a Career Conditional Firefighter, also at Okefenokee NWR.

Matt Smith joined the District at Piedmont NWR as a Forestry Technician Firefighter in May, 2011. Congratulations and welcome, guys!

# District 4

## Year overview- St. Marks, St. Vincent, and Lower Suwannee NWRs

District 4 had a very active wildfire year, both in and out of the District. Nearly all the fire staff were able to assist suppression efforts with multiple off refuge assignments. Many task books were completed throughout the district. Prescribed fire acreage for the district was below the 10-year average due to dry conditions and fire activity.

Other significant fire management program activity included: a Severity period declaration for the month of June, the development of two Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) with Levy and Wakulla Counties, and upgrades to refuge fire equipment and radio systems.

### Wildfire

St. Vincent Refuge had the largest wildfire in its history consuming 1,297 acres. The C4 fire occurred in a recently burned area with an 18-month rough. St. Marks responded to 10 wildfires, the largest being the Grits fire (399 acres) adjacent to the Ochlockonee River State Park. The remaining fires were all small threat fires. Seven wildfires were suppressed on or adjacent to Lower Suwannee NWR (3 fires/27.7 acres on refuge). The most significant of these was the 11-acre Huffer fire in June that burned in a dense dry swamp. This fire was contained by handtools and hoselays to avoid wetland damage from heavy equipment. Three of the four threat fires were managed exclusively by FWS personnel due to the state resources being overextended with other large ongoing fires in the area.

### Fuels Management

St. Vincent had one prescribed fire for 2,834 acres. St. Marks accomplished 17 prescribed fires for a total of 2,546 acres. This is the lowest accomplishment since 1989, well below the ten year average of 13,432 acres. A combination of poor



George Pelt getting his feet wet on a prescribed burn.

weather conditions and crews being away on fire assignment contributed to this low accomplishment. Fire crews on Lower Suwannee NWR conducted 11 burns for 2,662 acres. Only one unit (two burns) was funded directly by fuels dollars and the rest of the burns were funded by 1261 funds. Lower Suwannee NWR's acreage total was considerably less than the past few years, but above to the 10 year's average of 2,560 acres. Lower Suwannee NWR also completed 14 mechanical treatments for 69 acres.

### District Staff Assignments

The heavy wildfire load across the Southern Area in FY11 led to numerous opportunities for fire crew to travel to assist with wildfire suppression efforts. From District 4, 17 individuals were dispatched on resource orders to 51 assignments.

District 4 personnel assisted with suppression efforts in: SE Arkansas, Merritt Island NWR, Okefenokee NWR, east and west Texas, National Key Deer NWR and Ocala NF. Personnel from District 4 also assisted with a hurricane relief detail in eastern NC refuges clearing debris in the wake of Hurricane Irene.

### Training

Training opportunities were limited in FY11 with travel restrictions and limited fire program budgets. The district annual fire refresher & pack test was held at St. Marks in December. Additional fireline refresher training was provided to all carded fire crew at LSNWR, as well as the Chassahowitzka and Egmont Key NWRs in Fire District 4. See the table at right for details.

# District 4

## *continued*

### Outreach

Jennifer Hinckley and Greg Titus attended the National Society of American Forester's Convention in Albuquerque, NM and gave the first public presentation in the new Nature's Classroom education building at St. Marks NWR, "Flames on the Refuge".

Trixie Smith gave presentations at Wakulla High Scholl and Tallahassee Community College about prescribed fire and fire management on St. Marks Refuge.

Travis Pollard, Brian Pippin, and Josh Havird were trained in Project Learning Tree and later did several presentations to various groups.

A Russian Delegation on ecotourism visited St. Marks and observed a prescribed fire to understand how fire management and endangered species management go hand in hand.

### Staffing Changes

The current fire crew at the North Florida Refuge Complex (St. Marks and St. Vincent NWRs) is DFMO Greg Titus, PFS Jennifer Hinckley, PFT Joey Lord, lead forestry tech Bart Rye, equipment operator Willie Lindsey, forestry techs Trixie Smith, Dale Shiver, Travis Pollard, Brian Pippin, and SCEP Josh Havird. Buddy Aguilera moved to a new position at Yosemite NP.

The fire crew currently consists of FMO Vic Doig, lead forestry tech Jamie farmer, forestry techs Jaclyn Solodovnick and Anthony DiMaggio, and fire equipment operator George Pelt.

Jason Coates also participates in prescribed fire on the station as a collateral duty RXCM. There were no fire staff changes at Lower Suwannee NWR they did have significant turnover management.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructed	Taskbooks Completed
Jason Coates	S-212, ATV refresher	Heavy Equipment Training	
Anthony DiMaggio	ATV refresher	S-212	ENOP, FALB, ENGB, FIRB
Victor Doig	WIMS/RAWS, Burn Boss, ATV refresher	RX-341, RT-130, PLDO	HEGB
Jamie Farmer	WIMS/RAWS, Burn Boss, ATV refresher		HECM
Josh Havird	S-131, S-211, S-212, S-270, S-290, Southern Area Engine Academy		FALA, FFT2, FFT1, ICT5
Jennifer Hinckley	Stepping Up to Leadership, Burn Boss refresher		SITL
George Pelt	S-230, S-231, ATV refresher		ENGB
Brian Pippin	L-380, S-215, S-260, S-261, Southern Area Engine Academy		FIRB, ENGB, FEMO
Travis Pollard	L-280, S-290, Southern Area Engine Academy		FALB, FFT1, ICT5
Bart Rye	L-580, Burn Boss refresher		TFLD
Trixie Smith	L-380, S-390		ENGB, FIRB
Jaclyn Solodovnick	S-212, ATV refresher	Southern Area Engine Academy	FIRB, FALA
Greg Titus	L-580, Burn Boss refresher		
Christopher Wescott			FALA, FFT2

Refuge Manager John Kasbohm departed for an assignment at Sheldon – Hart Mountain Refuge Complex in Oregon, and Deputy Refuge Manager Daryl Magnuson departed for a post at the Havasu NWR in Arizona.

The incoming RM is Andrew Gude, and the Deputy will be Larry Woodward. Neither have any current fire qualifications.

# District 5

## *Year overview – Florida Panther, J.N. "Ding" Darling, National Key Deer, and Ten Thousand Island NWRs*

District 5 had a very busy year in 2011 in all aspects of fire management. The District was extremely busy with wildfires on the district this year. Both Loxahatchee and Merritt Island complexes had severity funding during the spring fire season. Fire management personnel from several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges in the Southeast Region and other regions assisted with fire suppression efforts. In addition to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service assistance; crews from The National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and The Bureau of Land Management assisted the district in fire suppression efforts this year.

In addition to a very busy wildfire and prescribed fire season within the District, several personnel assisted with firefighting and prescribed fire efforts throughout the United States as well as Hurricane Irene and the oil spill response. The district sent personnel to the Honey Prairie Fire, Texas, Washington, North Carolina, Arkansas, Mississippi, Virginia, and multiple assignments within Florida.

Outreach is a key component to educate the public on the importance of fire as a tool to manage the Refuge. The district's fire personnel participated in several outreach events this past year. These several events were for the general public such as the Everglades Festival at Loxahatchee. We also did outreach to special groups such as the FWS CARES group to help educate them on how fire can be used to accomplish many resource objectives.



*An aerial view of the Pad fire with Space Shuttle Atlantis on Pad A in the background. Ryan Sharpe/USFWS.*

### Wildfire

Fire management personnel responded to 47 wildfires in the district for approximately 37,859 acres. The breakdown for the fires and refuges are as follows:

Eleven fires for 4,295 acres at Merritt Island NWR, seven fires for 2,605 acres at St. Johns NWR, four fires for 2,591, Lake Woodruff NWR, one fire for 14 acres at Loxahatchee NWR, one fire for eight acres at Hobe Sound NWR, one fire for .3 acres at Lake Wales Ridge NWR, and 24 State assists for 28,346 acres.

Merritt Island NWR was in Severity for two months and Loxahatchee was in Severity for four months this past spring. The district had assistance from crews as far away as Washington State and four different agencies assist us with fires this year. This provided an excellent opportunity for personnel to work on task books and get experience in a fuel type they had not previously encountered.

### Fuel Management

Despite the extremely dry conditions, District 5 was able to complete 27 prescribed burns for over 34,000 acres this year.

Loxahatchee completed 11 burns for slightly over 26,865 acres. The 4 Fire Lab RX burns totaled 750, the purpose of these burns was to help modify and calibrate the new FIRETEK fire spread model/program.

Impoundments C7,C8,C9 and C10; these burns were completed as demonstration burns during the 2011 Everglades Day Festival, totaling 65 acres with assistance of the Prescribed Fire Training Center. Impoundment A totaled 350 acres. Lox Burn 21A totaling 3200 acres was burned with the assistance of the Prescribed Fire Training Center, this took place on north end of the refuge with heavy brush and untreated Melaleuca; the purpose of the burn was hazardous fuels reduction adjacent to Wellington, Florida and to reduce fuel loads so that contractors could gain access to area to treat exotic vegetation. Lox Burn 21B totaled 22,500 Acres completed through central and northern portions of the refuge.

Merritt Island NWR completed 14 burns this year 7,598 acres this year. Two of these burns were completed as joint burns with our local cooperators one with the Canaveral National Seashore and one with Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

Lake Woodruff NWR completed two burns this year for a total of 118 acres.

### District Staff Assignments

Fire management personnel were involved in several off district detail assignments as well this year. Paul Koch, Joe Sharbaugh, Dave Moran, Grant Gifford, Jon Wallace and Kris Kasper assisted with Hurricane Irene response.

# District 5

## *continued*

Joe Sharbaugh assisted with RX burning at Florida Panther NWR and assisted for two weeks with the East Texas fires.

Ryan Sharpe assisted with RX burning at Florida Panther NWR, detailed to Mid Columbia NWR Complex for severity and was on a fire assignment to East Texas.

Chris Wright assisted twice on the Honey Prairie Fire and one fire assignment to East Texas.

Dave Moran detailed to Mid Columbia NWR for severity, and one fire assignment to East Texas.

Jessica Vincent assisted for two weeks on the Honey Prairie Fire.

Grant Gifford did a 31 day detail to Pocosin Lakes as the Acting FMO, a 21 day detail to Pond Creek NWR as an ICT4, a 14 day detail to Felsenthal NWR as an ICT4, and took multiple trips within Florida to assist with wildfire and RX fires.

Cynthia Branham did a two week assignment to the Deep Water Horizon oil spill.

Rob Vernachio assisted on the Honey Prairie Fire for one assignment, and two assignments to west Texas consisting of two weeks and three weeks.

Michael Good assisted with RX fires at Florida Panther NWR, had one assignment to West Texas and spent seven days on the Blue Hole fire at National Key Deer NWR.

Jon Wallace serves as a primary Division Supervisor on the Southern Area Type 1 “Blue Team” and as a back-up Fire Behavior Analyst for the other two southern teams. He did a 21 day assignment to the Trans Pecos Complex as and FBAN, 21 day assignment to the Lateral West fire as a DIVS, 17 day assignment to SE Texas Complex as an OSC2 (t), Hurricane Irene Response as a OSC2 (t), 14 day detail to Boise as the

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Michael Good	M-581		RXB1	
Cynthia Branham	WIMS			
Dave Moran	L-380			
Joe Sharbaugh	S-200	S-212	ICT4	ICT4
Ryan Sharpe	S-330	ATV instructor	RXB2, TFLD; ATV	
Jessica Vincent	S-271 & S-290		ICT5	ICT5 & HECM
Patrick Pearson	L-580			
Grant Gifford		S-212		ICT4

National Fuel Specialist. Jon traveled to Missoula, Boise, and Tucson to support HFPAS, and had multiple trips within Florida to support FWS wildfires and RX fires.

Patrick Pearson serves on the Southern Area Type 1 Blue Team as a Primary Operations Branch Director. He did a 21 day assignment to West Texas, a 14 day assignment to the Lateral West Fire in Virginia, and a 14 day assignment to Southeast Texas this year. He also assisted with RX burns at Florida Panther and assisted with the Blue Hole Fire at National Key Deer NWR.

### Training

Several personnel within the district were able to complete key training this past year. This enabled them to open task books to further enhance their careers, many completed task books this year as well. District personnel assisted with instructing fire courses both in the Southeast and throughout the United States this past year.

### Honors, Awards, Committees

Jon Wallace continues to be the FWS national representative to the HFPAS modeling process, and the FWS national representative and Vice Chair to the NWCG Fire Danger Committee.

Grant Gifford is now a member of a sub-committee to the National Fire and Operations Safety Team assigned to look at engine standards for the FWS.

### Staffing Changes

The District welcomed two new fire personnel this year; Patrick Pearson reported in January as the new District FMO, and Ryan Roche reported in June as the new Lead Forestry Technician at Lake Wales Ridge NWR. Michael Good was offered and accepted the Prescribed Fire Specialist position at Merritt Island.

# District 6

## *Year overview – Florida Panther, J.N. “Ding” Darling, National Key Deer, and Ten Thousand Island NWRs*

The southeast region’s Fire Management District 6 is comprised of the 12 refuges in the southern tip of Florida and the Caribbean, with the District FMO based at Florida Panther NWR. It has been a year of change and innovation throughout the district with new overhead in several key positions.

The District FMO initiated the district’s first line officer meeting which produced our first district-wide delegation of authority. A district daily staffing sheet was inaugurated, as well as the policy of having a daily duty officer. Partnerships were strengthened with cooperators throughout the district through assistance on fires, cross-training, and educational outreach.

The district’s 10 full time fire staff and two red-carded SCAs worked on over 90 unplanned fires, assisted with teaching 14 different classes and refreshers, and participated in educational and outreach programs attended by approximately 2,300 children and families. 2011 was a dry year throughout south Florida and the Caribbean, with higher than average wildfires on many refuges in the District.

In addition to this unusually heavy local workload, staff were still able to complete mechanical work and prescribed burns, hurricane response, as well as support other refuges and agencies on fire assignments throughout the southeast.

### Wildfire

Fire activity for the district was higher than average due to extremely dry conditions in the region. Refuge staff suppressed fires on FWS lands and assisted state cooperators and Big Cypress National Preserve.



2011 Florida Panther NWR Fire Crew photo (L to R) Wes O'Connor, PJ Stevko, Ashlee Sams, Skip Palmer, Jay Mickey, Greg Suszek, Brian Bagozzi, Cass Palmer, Ryan Mong, Paul Stevko/USFWS.

District 6 Refuge	FY11 fires on/threatening refuge lands	FY11 assists
Caribbean Refuges	23	1
National Key Deer	11*	1
Florida Panther	1	17
JN Ding Darling	0	6

### Fuels Management

Florida Panther Refuge completed five prescribed burns for a total of 2,386 acres and mechanically treated 860 acres.

Ding Darling completed their Fire Management Plan revision, prepared burn plans and units, and assisted on prescribed fires on FWS lands elsewhere in Florida.

National Key Deer completed 50 acres of mechanical treatment and assisted with the prescribed burns on FWS lands elsewhere in Florida.

District personnel completed pre-burn monitoring and planning work at Ten Thousand Islands.

### District Staff Assignments

District staff assisted on wildfire and severity assignments at Okefenokee on the Honey Prairie Fire, in Texas, Louisiana, and Florida and on hurricane recovery in the Carolinas.

All refuges in the district have been working with local cooperators to build pools of resources for wildfire response. Fire refreshers and other courses hosted at local units included refuge staff as well as participants from the Florida Forest Service, Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, the Institute for Regional Conservation, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (State Parks), and local fire departments.

# District 6

*continued*

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Paul Ryan	S330, S336, RT300F, RT212	S-212 (Unit), RT130	STLD/TFLD	
Dana Cohen	S491, RT212	Rx310 (Lead), Rx301 (Unit), Rx341 (Unit), S212 (Coordinator), S130/190/I100/L180 (Lead), RT130		TFLD, RXB2
Richard Hajduk (SCA)	L280			
Pamela Braff (SCA)	S130/190/I100/L180, S212, RX310			
Greg Suszek	Fire Effects Monitoring, RT372, M410			
Jay Mickey	RT372, WFDSS	RT130		
Cass Palmer	WFDSS, IQCS	RT130		
Ashlee Samms (SCA)	FEM, S211, Rx310			
Brian Bagozzi		RT130		
PJ Stevko		RT130		
James Padilla		RT130		

### Staffing Changes

In 2011 the District filled the majority of vacancies in the fire program and continued redefining key positions in the fire organization. The Florida Panther NWR Fire Control Officer position was changed to incorporate duties associated with an Assistant FMO. The position was advertised as a GS-9 AFMO and Robert Trincado has been selected.

Wes O'Connor, who has detailed to Florida Panther NWR for several winter seasons, was hired into the program's Equipment Operator position (vice-Privett).

District FMO Cass Palmer came on early in the fiscal year, and this was the first full year for Greg Suszek, Prescribed Fire Specialist for Florida Panther NWR and the refuges of southwest Florida, and Dana Cohen, Fire Management Specialist at National Key Deer NWR.

# District 7

## *Year overview – Mississippi Sandhill Crane, Bon Secour, SE Louisiana Complex, SW Louisiana Complex, Noxubee, South Arkansas – North Louisiana Complex, and Grand Bay NWR*

The drought of 2010-11 is now at 18 months duration, and most locations in District 7 are 15-20" below normal precipitation. KBDIs above 700 were common during FY11. The situation is comparable to historic, multi-year droughts of the mid-50s, late 80s, and early 2000s. Wildfire activity also reached historic levels around the district, with fires occurring in unusual locations such as green tree reservoirs, beaver dam impoundments, and bottomland hardwood forests in Arkansas, Louisiana and the Mississippi Delta. Wildland-Urban Intermix fires at Bayou Sauvage NWR in New Orleans and MS Sandhill Crane NWR in coastal MS presented challenges for interagency coordination and smoke management. Dry conditions also created some rare opportunities, such as a wildfire used for resource benefits and a prescribed burn of organic soils at Southwest Louisiana NWRs; and the removal of hundreds of acres of timber at MS Sandhill Crane. Tropical Storm Lee eventually offered some temporary relief, dumping up to 10" of rain on portions of Louisiana and Mississippi. However, the drought is forecast to redevelop and intensify over the next several months.

### Wildfire

There were four approved requests for Severity funding in District 7 this fiscal year, one request in mid-June for the coastal refuges of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama; and three requests for the South Arkansas/North Louisiana complexes. This area actually began and ended the year in Severity, with one request in October 2010, and two requests in August and September 2011.



*Dante's Inferno Wildfire threatens Ocean Springs, MS neighborhood, June 2011, by Ray Shows/USFWS.*

Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR and Jackson County MS were subjected to an unprecedented onslaught of Wildland-Urban Intermix fires between mid-April and mid-July, most notably four large fires in Ocean Springs and Gautier. The Soccer Field, Dante's Inferno, Breakwater, and Bayou Bend wildfires totaled 1470 acres, with 163 acres on FWS land. The fires occurred in a 20 square mile stretch of land between U.S. Highway 90 and Interstate 10, two of the most heavily traveled roads in the southeast. These fires forced road closures and mandatory evacuations of residential neighborhoods, a nursing home, and an industrial park. Two decades of interagency team building paid off, as there was no loss of life or property during the fires. A significant indicator of the severity of the drought: MS Sandhill Crane reported more lightning-strike fires in FY11, than the previous twenty years combined.

The first round of Severity in South Arkansas/North Louisiana occurred in October 2010, with 5 fires for 27 acres. In August-September 2011, the extended initial attack organization based at Felsenthal NWR responded to 15 fires for 613 acres across a large area of north Louisiana and south Arkansas. During these two severity incidents, fires occurred at Felsenthal, Overflow, and Pond Creek NWRs in Arkansas; and D'Arbonne, Upper Ouachita, and Red River NWRs in Louisiana.

SW Louisiana fire personnel responded to 17 wildfires across the Complex with a combined size of approximately 21,600 acres. The Tourbe fire (2,200) was one of the longest active fires in recent history on Sabine NWR. It was discovered on June 18 and was controlled nearly three months later following Tropical Storm Lee. An additional two large fires, the Cocodrie (5,820 acres) and the Grand Feu (6,174 acres) burned during that same time. The Tison fire (5,968 acres) burned one month prior.

With 32 wildfires on the SE Louisiana Complex, 2011 was one of the busiest on record. These fires burned 1,837 acres. Even the City of New Orleans got involved, when a lightning strike ignited a fire adjacent to Bayou Sauvage NWR. New Orleans was smoked in for multiple days resulting in a lot of media attention. The Governor declared a State of Emergency and the National Guard responded with eight Black Hawk helicopters.

All told, there were 188 wildfires in District 7 during FY11 for a total of 26,000 acres, with 17,000 of those acres on FWS land.

### Fuels Management

Despite a number of obstacles including budget cuts, drought, persistent fog, and narrow windows of opportunity, FMO District 7 had significant accomplishments in fuels treatments.

# District 7

## *continued*

There were a total of 48 prescribed burns for over 47,000 acres, 10 mechanical treatments for 1400 acres, and one herbicide treatment for 280 acres.

At the SW Louisiana NWR complex, prescribed fire was a key component in two high profile, interdisciplinary projects. In February approximately 24,000 acres of western Sabine NWR were burned over a three-day period. One major objective of this project was to improve visibility and access to assist in feral hog management activities. Aerial gunning of hogs started two days after the completion of the burning. In one afternoon 136 hogs were taken. This project required the assistance and support of five neighboring landowners in the form of MOU's with estimated 45 miles of shared property boundaries.

A 6,000 acre unit of the Lacassine Pool was burned in August. Through months of drought and manipulation of water control structures, the water level in the Lacassine Pool impoundment was lower than it had been in recent history. This allowed the pool to be burned under conditions similar to the "severe fire danger conditions" identified in Lacassine CCP. This project drew a large amount of interest and support from the local public, to the point that a response to a congressional inquiry was required.

A total of 10 prescribed fires were conducted on the complex this year with a combined size of 34,500 acres.

SE Louisiana NWRs had a relatively successful year, even with a persistent drought and no fuels dollars. The Complex burned 10 units for a total of 1,436 acres. Due to the dry conditions, the fire effects were pronounced. The down side to burning under such dry conditions was how persistent the burns were. Two prescribed fires continued to burn for a month before they were called out.

Noxubee NWR had a productive year with over 7500 acres treated with prescribe fire. The Refuge hosted a

crew of 10 AmeriCorps students that assisted with prescribe burning and other work projects. There were 180 acres of mechanical treatments and 281 acres of herbicide treatments.

At Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR there was a three-month window of opportunity for prescribed burning, and nine burns were completed for a total of 1600 acres; 900 of these were during the growing season. There were nine mechanical treatments for 1433 acres. Dry conditions allowed for the complete removal of timber from 900 acres, and construction of new firelines on 21 acres.

### District Staff Assignments

Forty firefighters, A-Ds and collateral duty personnel accepted 124 assignments to fires and tropical storms, for a total of 1333 days on assignment. Almost half of these assignments provided assistance to Refuges within District 7, and about one-fourth were to Texas. District firefighters completed 21 taskbooks this year.

The leadership skills and experience found in District 7 are demonstrated by the following assignments as Incident Commanders or as Incident Management Team members during FY11:

Tony Wilder served as ICT1 on the Southern Area Red Team at five wildfires in Texas, Virginia and Oklahoma, and as ICT3 at SW Louisiana.

Paul Reynolds served with the Red Team as TFLD, DIVS, and OSC2-Trainee at five wildfires in Texas, Virginia, and Oklahoma.

Larry 'Gator' Smith served as ICT3-Trainee in Texas in April, and as DIVS with the Red Team in Georgia and Texas, and ICT3 during the series of summer wildfires at SW Louisiana.

Matthew Johnson served as TFLD-Trainee with the Red Team in Georgia and Texas.

Sami Gray served as ICT3 for the FWS response to Hurricane Irene in August, and during the series of spring and summer wildfires at MS Sandhill Crane NWR.

Dave DeMeyere served as ICT3 at Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR in June.

Brad Bailey served as ICT4 at Felsenthal NWR in September.

James Bates served as ICT4 at Felsenthal NWR in September.

Chris LeRouge served as ICT4 at Felsenthal NWR in October 2010.

### Honors, Awards, Committees

Bastrop Complex Unified Command which includes Southern Area Red Team, Bastrop County Emergency Services, Texas Forest Service and NIMO will receive award for "Most Notable Emergency Response Implementation, Federal, State, or Local Government". Tony Wilder will accept the award on behalf of the Red Team.

Tony Wilder served as member of the Steering Committee of the MS Interagency Prescribed Fire Council.

Sami Gray served as FWS representative on the National Interagency Committee to develop the Prescribed Fire Implementation Guide.

### Staffing Changes

SW LA: This is the first time since 2005 that the fire crew at SWLA is fully staffed. In January, Shaun Martinet hired on as a Forestry Technician. He comes to SWLA from the Natchez Trace Parkway fire crew. In August, Brian Donnelly was hired as Forestry Technician. Brian came from Santa Ana NWR in Alamo Texas. Both are welcome additions and have been put to work.

SE LA: Our equipment operator transferred to Bayou Cocodrie NWR. The process is underway to fill this vacancy.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
SW LA				
Larry "Gator" Smith	HMGB Refresher			DIVS, ICT3
Jon King	S-234, S-390, WIMS/NFDRS		ICT4	FIRB, HMGB, ENGB
Brian Donnelly	WIMS/NFDRS		ENGB, RXB3	ENOP, FALB, FFT1, ICT5
Matthew Johnson				TFLD
SW LA				
Dave DeMeyere	WFDSS, IQCS	S-130/S-190	BCMG	RXB2
Chris LeRouge		S-130/S-190		
Jeremy Erickson	S-231, GIS	S-130/S-190	ICT4	FALB, ENGB, FIRB, HECM
Neil Lalonde			FFT1, ICT5	
Noxubee NWR				
Paul Reynolds	S-300	S-212- 2 times	None	OSC2
Chad Fondren	GIS		HEMG	
Dillan McInnis	GIS		ENGB, FALA	
Justen Boysen			FALA	
MS Sandhill Crane				
recurring training	55 courses completed			
Brad Bailey	L-380, N-9305	Basic Firefighter		
Katie Baker	Basic Firefighter, S-212		FALA	
Rebecca Goosman		RT-130		
Jodey Hall	IS-700		ENGB	
Mike Krebs	S-232, S-234	RT-130	FIRB, HEQB, ICT4	
Grant Lovato	IS-700, S-212			FALA
Alex Miller	B3, Basic Firefighter, IS-200, S-212, S-290			FALA
Alex Ott	Basic Firefighter			
Alex Patterson	Basic Firefighter			
Bert Rager		RT-130		FALB
Scott Saucier	GIS	RX-341		
Bunk Twiss	WFDSS	IQCS		
Tony Wilder	L-580			
Other locations				
Eddie Harsh				ENGB
Robert Harris			FFT1	
Shannon Holaway				FALB

Noxubee NWR filled two vacancies in fire this past year. Justin Boysen, transferred from the FWS in Wisconsin. Justin has a BS in Biology and some fire previous fire experience. Dillon McInnis has a BS in Forestry and fire experience from four years as part time with the Forest

Service and working with Jackson and the Cherokee Hot Shots.

MS Sandhill Crane NWR: Brian Henley, Fire Team Member, departed for a job with the USDA Forest Service in Colorado. Josh Havard will make the transition from SCEP student to

fulltime employee, as a new member of the Fire Team. One GS-4 firefighter slot remains open. Alex Ott has made a great contribution to the fire program, both as a Fire Effects Intern and as an A-D FFT2.

# Regional Office

## Year Overview

The 2011 Fiscal Year (FY) proved to have one of the longest and most expensive fire seasons in history. The Honey Prairie fire on Okefenokee NWR (started April 29) and Pains Bay fire on Alligator River NWR (started May 5) together burned more than 350,000 acres at a cost of greater than \$65 million. This year saw the highest number of severity packages submitted. The severity packages are a means for refuges to increase their fire staffing in accordance with their step-up plans. Even with the heavy suppression workload, the region exceeded the hazardous fuels reduction (HFR) targets, assisted with all hazard response, represented the region and service on numerous committees and working teams and served as instructors in training courses of all levels. Throughout this very busy year, our SAFETY record remains exemplary.

Other notables:

- The Southern Area has three Incident Management Teams. The Southeast Region of FWS now provides Incident Commanders (and many other subordinate positions) to two of the three teams. Tony Wilder is IC for the Red Team (Type 1) and Michael Dueitt is IC for the Type 2 Team.
- Regional Staff assisted the National Office on an outreach project “Burning for Habitat”. This project developed tools for our fire management officer to educate the CARE friends group, partners and NGO’s on the importance of prescribed fire.
- The National Review of the Regional Fire Management Division was conducted in April, 2011. The last review was conducted in June, 1993. The Fire Division was recognized by the National Fire Branch for our exemplary management of the DOI Medical Standards, Rural Fire Assistance and Ready Reserve Programs.

## Wildfire and All- Hazard

Extended periods of dry weather caused FY11 to be a very active year. The region’s fire personnel managed more than 381 wildfires on 48 refuges, many of which went to extended attack. Six severity requests in four districts were submitted for a combined total of \$1,228,132 approved for utilization. Exhibiting fiscal responsibility through prudent money management practices, and by charging to wildfires where appropriate, the field only spent \$358,950 of the funds, saving a balance of \$869,182. This translates into 71% of funds being saved. These figures do not include the severity expenditures for the South Arkansas / North Louisiana Refuge Complexes who began operating under severity in August and continue to date.

While FY11 had a fairly active hurricane season, luckily only Hurricane Irene made landfall in NC on August 27. Sami Gray stepped up as IC to lead the response team which spent approximately 10 days in the Carolinas assisting the Refuges and their personnel recover from the storm.

## Fuels Management

Even with limited funding and extended periods of very dry weather making for tough burning conditions, the Southeast Region was able to achieve the regional target of 62,000 acres. Regional Refuge management is committed to using prescribed fire as a management tool and completed an additional 63,000 acres using 126x and other funds. These acres were accomplished in a safe and efficient manner. Several regional staff attended various state prescribed fire council meetings throughout the year.

## Predictive Service

Predictive Services remained very active in supporting this year’s record setting wildfire activity. In addition, Kevin Scasny and Denver Ingram (NPS) continued to refine new GACC-wide graphical depictions of key current and forecast indexes of fire danger.

Predictive Service continues to make exceptional progress in automating many data retrieval and product generation processes. Great strides were made in researching and incorporating solar and geomagnetic effects in day to day, monthly, interseasonal, and multidecadal fire weather outlooks. In the training world, we conducted a region-wide FWS-Forest Technology Services combination training session at Savannah River in August. Topics covered over the 1.5 day session included RAWS maintenance (both fixed and portable), and “nuts and bolts” training on using WIMS, NFDRS, and Fire Family Plus.

## Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

The region acquired \$83,000 of DOI Ready Reserve funds which were distributed to the field. These funds are to be used to increase rural fire department wildland fire operations safety, effectiveness, and capacity by sponsoring local level training opportunities.

This year the region invested another \$15,000 and provided a steering committee member for the further development of the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment. This assessment is an interagency cooperative tool utilized at federal, state and local levels. Field personnel continue to work with state forestry agencies and other cooperators, in development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. These are being developed on a wide array of spatial levels, from county wide, down to single small communities.

This year the SE Region treated approximately 40,000 acres of hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface.

## Training and Qualifications

The FY11 annual Fire Managers Workshop was held in Macon, Georgia and attended by regional fire managers, burn bosses (RXB2&1) and line officers. The workshop provided updates on current fire policy, identified successes of the previous year and the challenges of the next and created a forum to exchange management strategies. The workshop also gave Piedmont NWR chance to display and discuss the fire/fuels management programs of the refuge. This workshop met the regional requirement of a biannual Burn Boss Refresher. The following people received regional awards for their accomplishments:

- Gregory Titus  
*Regional Leadership Award*
- Victor Doig  
*Regional Fuels Management Award*
- Sami Gray and Pat Boucher  
*Regional All Risks Award*
- Doug Hunt and Jennifer Hinckley  
*Regional Outreach Award*

Rick Struhar served as Chair of the Southern Area Training Working Team and Steering Committee Member of the Southern Area Advanced Fire and Aviation Academy. Sixteen USFWS representatives from throughout the region assisted in training course delivery at the academy. A total of 20 course sessions were conducted over the two week period in June. FWS had 23 attendees, which is considerably less than previous years. Decline in attendance is probably due to budget constraints and the busy fire season. This interagency geographic area scope effort is among the largest occurring in the country.

FWS co-sponsored, along with the US Forest Service, National Park Service, and the Southern Group of State Foresters, the delivery of L-580, Leadership Is Action Course.

This leadership training was implemented as the Shiloh Staff Ride, a multi-day interactive look at the Battle of Shiloh. FWS had 12 participants with Tony Wilder serving as Subject Matter Expert and Bob Eaton as Senior Leader.

We coordinate with the states in the training arena on a variety of levels. Most notable is our involvement in the TN/KY Wildland Fire Academy. This year was the 9<sup>th</sup> 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 inception nine years ago. Over the years Mike has coordinated and led a wide variety of 200 and 300 level courses. Mirroring last year, this year’s courses were S-230 Crew Boss and S-231 Engine Boss. Thank you to Mike and his roving band of instructors for another successful year.

This year a significant number of position task books were completed by service fire personnel in the field and at the regional office. This can be attributed to 1.) The high volume of wildfire activity occurring on service lands this year, and 2.) The implementation of an interagency priority trainee dispatching process implemented at the Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC). In summary; an interagency list of priority trainees was developed. A Training Specialist was employed at SACC during times of Preparedness Levels 4 and 5 to contact agencies and incidents directly and facilitate the process of deploying the trainees. The number of trainees placed on assignment coupled with the volume of completed task books suggests the process was successful.

All Position Task Books (PTB’s) completed throughout the region ultimately come through the regional office for regional agency certification and certification in the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS). This is done after being initiated by the unit line officer and District Fire Management Officer.

Once the PTB is completed the District FMO provides agency certification then the book is forwarded to the regional office. The purpose of the regional involvement is to provide a final quality check and ensure qualifications standards are applied consistently throughout the region. This process occurred more than twice this year.

During the past few years, an effort has been implemented to “clean up” our qualifications records in IQCS. Individuals in the regional office and in the field put forth considerable effort to fill documentation holes and eliminate unnecessary administrative actions in the system. This will be an ongoing effort but we are seeing progressively cleaner and more complete qualifications documentation every day.

Kevin Scasny, FWS Meteorologist, helped to conduct a region-wide FWS-Forest Technology Systems combination training session at Savannah River. Topics over the 1.5 day session included RAWS maintenance (both fixed and portable), and “nuts and bolts” operator training on WIMS, NFDRS, and Fire Family Plus.

The National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC), directed by Mike Dueitt, coordinated the training of 145 individuals. Most of the training at PFTC is focused on the use of prescribed fire as a safe and effective land management tool, but they also offer courses focused on Agency Administrators and Biologists. PFTC had good participation in their FY11 Agency Administrators Workshop and Resource Specialists Workshop. The Center cooperated with the University of Florida to offer three upper-division college credits through the College of Forest Resources and Conservation. More information on PFTC can be found at: [www.fws.gov/fire/pftc](http://www.fws.gov/fire/pftc).

# Regional Office

*continued*

## Southern Area Coordination Center

Pat Boucher, Assistant Area Coordinator located at SACC, continues to assist Ecological Services (ES) with the Deepwater Horizon oil incident in creating and placing requests for dispatch. From the incident creation on Apr 23 through March 8, 2011 there have been 3,413 overhead resources processed.

Pat provided ROSS/dispatching support to the FWS Hurricane Irene response and continues to work with Russ Langford, FWS MN, and Jon Skeels ROSS Project Manager to place the specialized equipment that FWS use for fire or all-hazard into the catalog for selection. This process is still on-going and awaiting NWCG to approve.

NWCG approved all the ES and Fisheries unit identifiers Pat had created. She worked with ROSS Project Manager in placing these unit identifiers into ROSS. The PDs for other biological positions, written by Roxanna Hinzman, ES, and Chris Wilcox, FWS NO, have been sent to the appropriate NWCG working group for approval.

Pat helped to coordinate creation of FY10 Region 4 Fire Division Report that highlighted the accomplishments, training, awards, and coming and goings of all personnel. The annual report has discontinued most narrative information and Pat wanted to insure that the field was still recognized for all their efforts. This will be the second publication and Pat extends her gratefulness to all that helped with this project.

Pat serves on a small team at SACC charged to develop and implement a survey to determine how the field uses the current web page.

The surveys information will be used to revamp and improve web page.

## Budget

The FY11 budget year was very challenging. The expected budget reduction for this year was planned at -10% from the President's budget which reduced our funding to field stations. Added to this reduced budget was a continuing resolution that lasted until April 12. When the final fire funding allocation came through it was early May. The uncertainty of budget left us planning for the worst and missing out on several fire program opportunities throughout the year.

## Fire Ecology

The Fire Ecologists in the region, Sue Wilder and Vince Carver, had a busy FY supporting the field in ecological matters and supporting suppression efforts of the many wildfires in the southern area.

In addition to her normal duties, Sue serves as a steering committee Vice Chair for NAFRI's M-580 and has assisted in developing a Fire Effects Monitoring course. She participated in biological reviews of numerous refuges and takes the lead on all the Burn Area Rehabilitation projects.

Vince moved his family from eastern North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia during the active fire season. He is a member of the NWCG's SmoC committee, produced a handout focused on minimizing impacts of invasive vegetation, worked with personnel from the US Forest Service to compose a document to help fire practitioners manage nighttime smoke, and assisted fire and air quality personnel with smoke modeling and inventory.

Both are on the FWS National Fire Ecologist Team and have continued work on producing 'species profiles' which help fire managers make burn objectives based on a species specific habitat needs.

## Planning

Fire Management Planning section, Phil Weston, accomplished the review of 11 revised Fire Management Plans, updated 18, conducted 3 Refuge Level Fire Management reviews, and collaborated with State and Federal partners on two State Interagency Cooperative Wildland Fire Management & Stafford Act Response Agreements (Arkansas and Georgia). He and Sue Wilder have been coordinating with the Natural Resource Division related to Comprehensive Conservation Plans and Habitat Management Plans.

Josh O'Connor served on the Fire Program Analysis (FPA) Support Working Team (SWT) representing the FWS. He also worked with the field to ensure that all reporting requirements for wildfires and hazardous fuels treatments were completed and correct.

## Regional Staff Assignments

Bob Eaton, Regional Fire Management Coordinator, served as SOF1(t) on the Southern Area Red team in Virginia.

Pat Boucher, SACC Assistant Coordinator: Detailed as SACC Coordinator from July 1 – September 11.

Vince Carver, Regional Fire Ecologist: assisted with suppression as DIVS(t), AREP on efforts on the Pains Bay fire, North Carolina, and Hurricane Irene response coordination.

Mike Dueitt, Director of PFTC: served as Incident Commander on the Southern Area Type 2 IMT on seven wildfire incidents in Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, Virginia and Georgia.

Pete Kubiak – Dep. RFMC: Operations Section Chief T2 (OSC2) and Air Operations Branch Director (AOBD), Honey Prairie Fire, OSC2 on Trans Pecos Complex (Texas), and Lateral West Fire (Great Dismal Swamp NWR). Assisted with the Hurricane Irene Regional Response Team.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Pat Boucher		ROSS-2 sessions		
Vince Carver		RX 341, Advanced Smoke Modeling, L-580		DIVS
Pete Kubiak		L-580 Shiloh Staff Ride		
Josh O'Connor	SUTL	RX 301, RX341		DIVS
Mike Dueitt		Agency Administrator Workshop, Resource Advisor Workshop		ICT1
Sue Wilder		RX 341, Monitoring Workshops, Monitoring Refresher		
Glen Stratton		RX 301, RX 341	OSC1	

Josh O'Connor, Fire Management Specialist: served as DIVS(t) on the Southern Area Red IMT on 2 Type 1 wildfires in Texas and worked as a DIVS on the FWS Hurricane Irene response team.

Rick Struhar, Regional WUI Specialist: assisted with Hurricane Irene response coordination and expanded dispatch.

Phillip Weston, Regional Fire Planner, served as Planning Section Chief on the Southern Area Type 2 IMT on five wildfire incidents in Texas, Oklahoma and Georgia.

Sue Wilder, Regional Fire Ecologist, served as Resource Unit Leader on the Southern Area Blue Type 1 IMT on wildfires in Texas, Georgia, North Carolina: Hurricane Irene Regional Response Team

Glen Stratton, Regional Prescribed Fire Specialist, served as OPSC on the Southern Area Type 2 team on five wildfire incidents in Virginia, Georgia, Texas and Oklahoma. Served as ICT3 on the Lateral West Wildfire, Virginia.

## Staffing Changes

Vince Carver, Fire Management Officer at Pocosin Lakes NWR, accepted the Regional Fire Ecologist position in December of 2010.

Yolanda Smith, Fire Office Assistant, accepted a position in Realty located at the Regional Office.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Division of Fire Management  
1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 420  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
<http://www.fws.gov/southeastfire>  
<http://twitter.com/USFWSFireSE>

November 2011



USFWS/Rob Wood