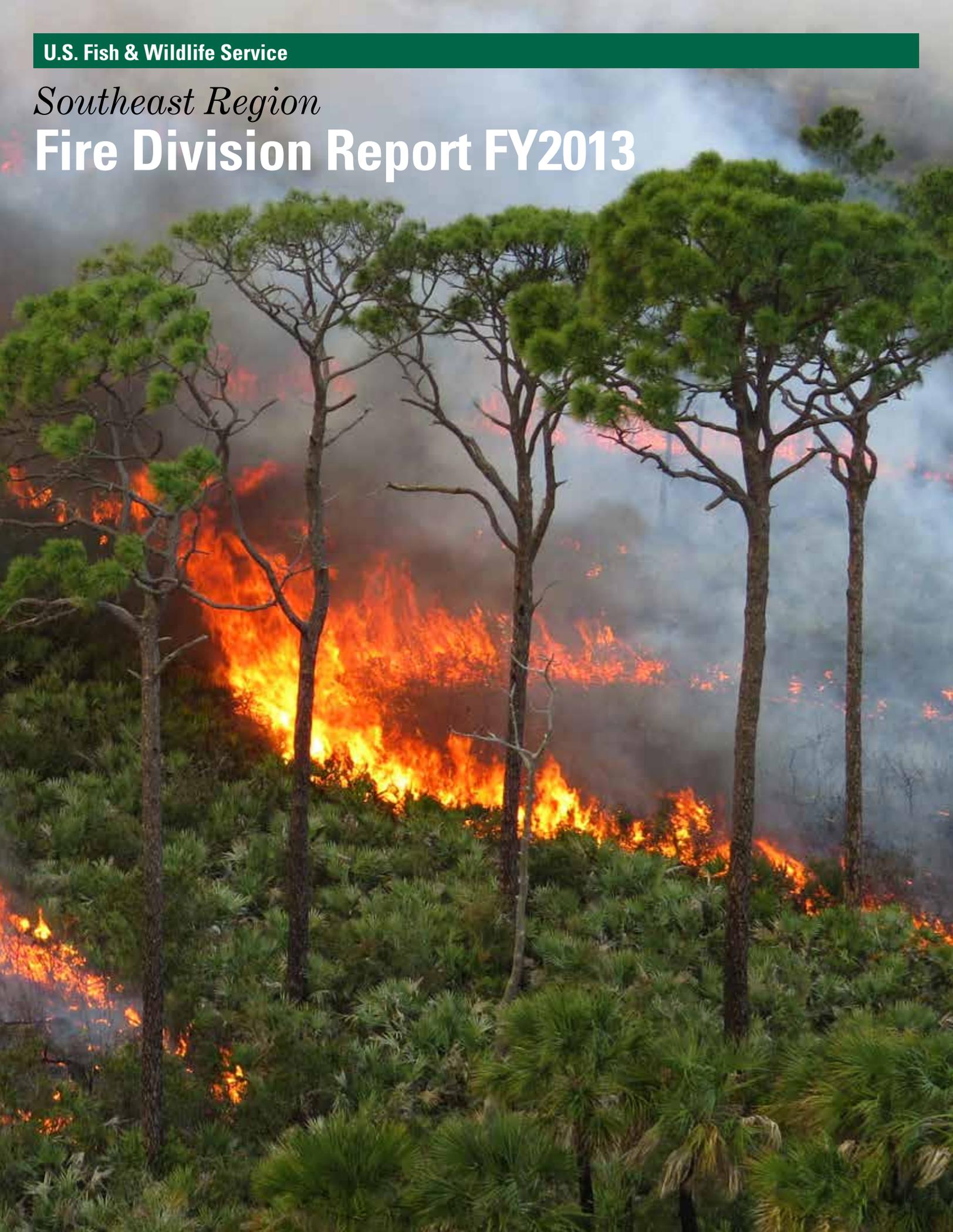
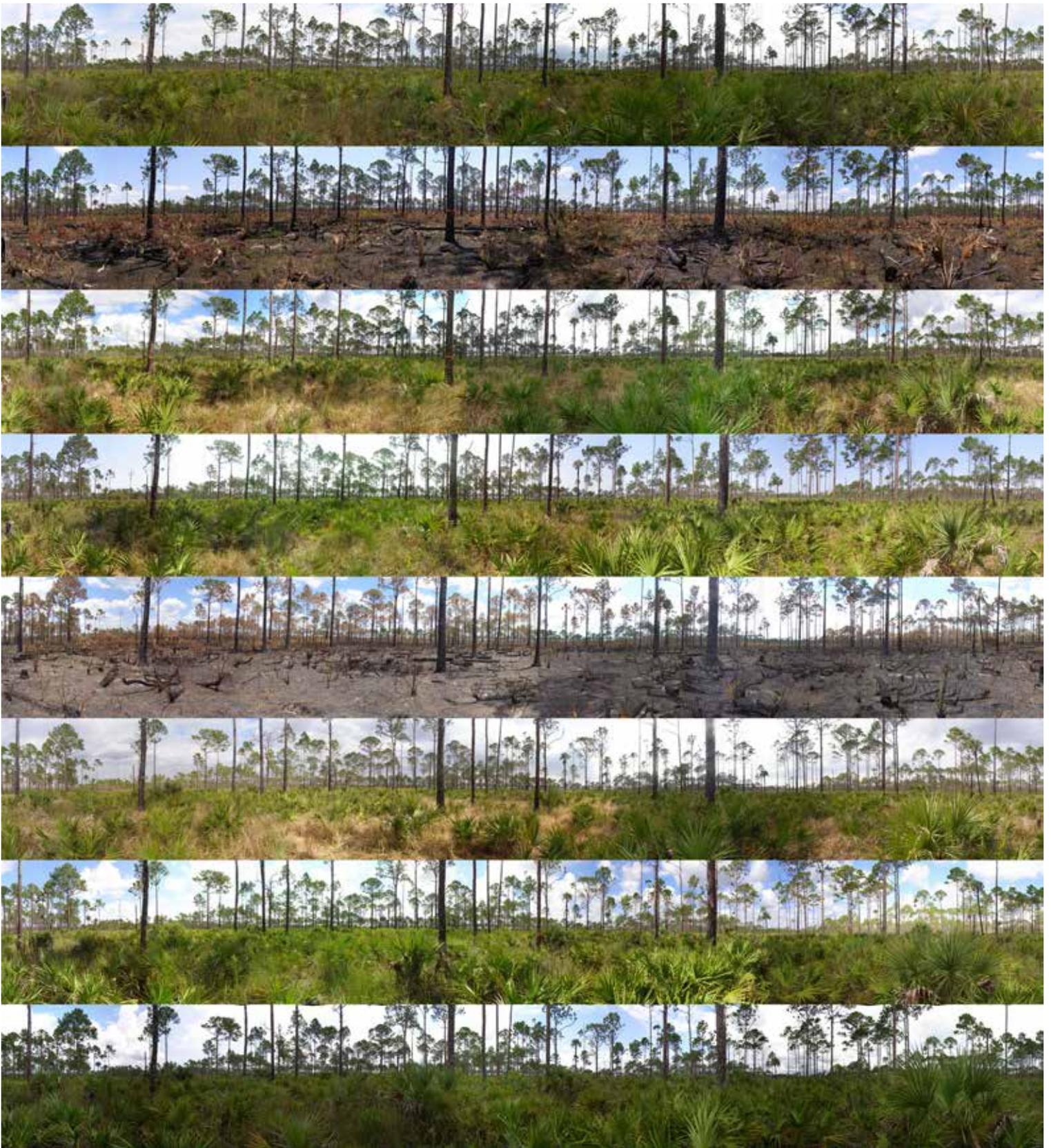


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region

Fire Division Report FY2013





This photo series shows a set of 360 degree panoramic photos taken at Florida Panther NWR. These photos cover a five and a half year history of fire and habitat response on the southeast corner of the refuge. Each panoramic photo contains a series of 15 photos stitched together. Photos from top to bottom: Pre-burn January 2007, immediate post-burn, six month post-burn, one year post-burn, two year post-burn (post wildfire), six month post wildfire, one year post wildfire, two year post wildfire, credit USFWS.

From the Chief

From the Chief

I look back at Fiscal Year (FY) 13 with the utmost respect for the work our Southeast FWS employees do. Collaborative efforts, both internal and external, continue to grow. We are building relationships to maintain our ability to manage these precious natural resources on FWS lands and across the landscape.

Safety and protection in fire are paramount. So too is the work to preserve our critical fire-dependent habitats. To accomplish our fire management work we depend on well-trained and skilled fire/natural resource management professionals. This regional team of professionals has applied their knowledge and leadership, which have led us to a great fire safety record. Thank you!

The FY 13 Annual Narrative paints a picture of a dedicated workforce that persevered through a year of decline and unusual circumstances. Consider:

- Southeast Region has 29 less permanent full-time fire funded employees than October 2011;
- Southeast Region fire funding was reduced from \$13.5 million in FY10 to \$10.13 million in FY13 (-26%) overall; and
- The Federal Government went through a sequestration process that reduced our actual fire funds by 5% in April and interrupted our peak prescribed burn period.

Despite these constraints, our prescribed fire program continued to achieve excellent results in lieu of a reduced fire workforce and funding. Of particular interest is the amount of lightning season (April – August) prescribed burning that was accomplished, 27,613 acres. The effort to accomplish these acres was far greater than in years past due to smaller burn units that could be safely accomplished with smaller burn crews.

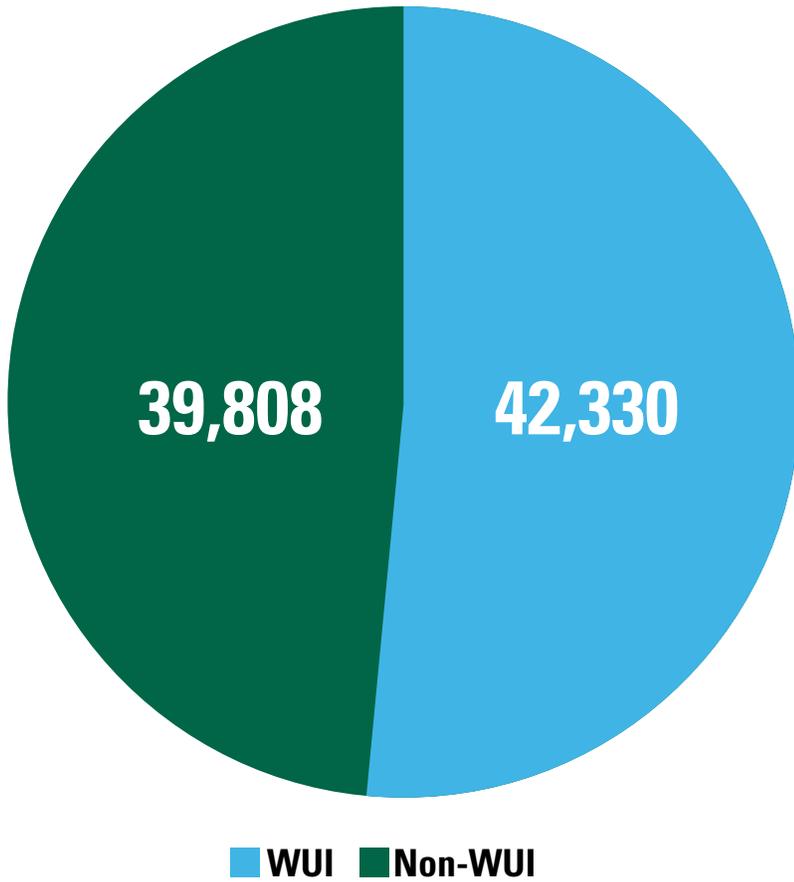
Our Regional wildfire activity was slightly down this year in number of fires and acres when compared to our Regional ten-year average. Florida had significant potential as the entire state was running high fire danger indices in March and April. We had 2 fire severity packages submitted and approved from Florida refuges during this period. In July, August and September, many of our fire carded folks were supporting fire suppression efforts out West.

This snapshot of our fire management program in the Southeast Region shows the passion that our employees bring to the job every day.



Introduction

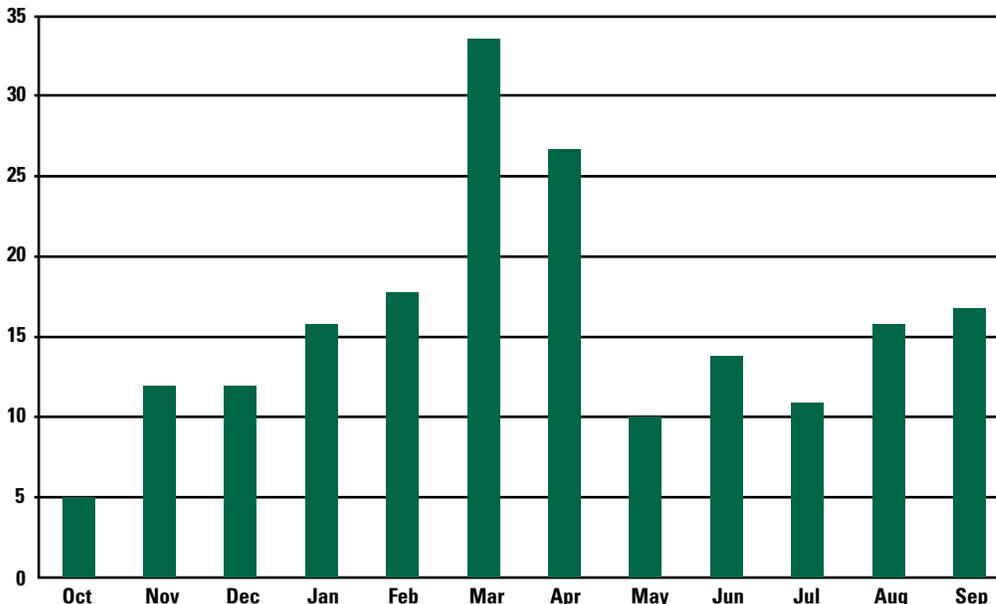
Region 4 Wildfire and Treatment Acres on FWS Lands



Fire Reports for FY 2013

Refuge	Fires
Alligator River NWR	8
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	1
Bayou Savage NWR	9
Big Branch NWR	5
Blackbeard Island NWR	3
Cabo Rojo NWR	11
Cameron Prairie NWR	1
Carolina Sandhills NWR	3
Cedar Island NWR	1
Chickasaw NWR	1
D'Arbonne NWR	1
Eufaula NWR	1
Felsenthal NWR	1
Florida Panther NWR	8
Grand Bay NWR	7
J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR	1
Key Cave NWR	1
Laguna Cartagena NWR	7
Mackay Island NWR	4
Merritt Island NWR	29
Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR	35
National Key Deer NWR	3
Okefenokee NWR	1
Overflow NWR	1
Pea Island NWR	1
Piedmont NWR	4
Pinckney Island NWR	1
Pocosin Lakes NWR	5
Sabine NWR	10
Savannah-Pinckney NWR	1
St. Johns NWR	7
St. Marks NWR	2
Vieques NWR	14
Wassaw NWR	1
Wheeler NWR	2
White River NWR	1

Region 4 Wildfire Starts



District 1

Overview

During FY13, weather patterns approximated historic average conditions over District 1 for the first time in more than a decade. This change from the summer drought has allowed business to be conducted in more traditional time frames.

During late summer, the District swapped type 6 engines with District 7, allowing the Southwest Louisiana Complex to acquire an almost new truck, while we were able to maintain fire suppression equipment at Mackay Island NWR.

Wildfire

Across the District, weather conditions resembled traditional historic patterns, with a moderately dry spring followed by a wet summer. These conditions produced only a few days of Preparedness Levels 4 or 5. Fire crews on the District did respond to 18 calls; five of which were support actions. A total of 372 acres burned on refuge lands.

Fuels Management

As budgets for hazardous fuels reduction decline, it becomes more difficult to perform treatments within the District. Nonetheless, using ground ignition methods the District executed eight prescribed fires for a total of 2,917 acres. Nearly 200 additional acres were treated either mechanically or chemically across the District. The two week moratorium on prescribed fire treatments during March of 2013 caused us to miss a number of potential burn windows.

District staff are presently developing a Longleaf Pine restoration program on the Cedar Island NWR. They are working to develop alternate funding streams, build relationships with potential cooperators and seeking ways to promote growing-season burns in order to support this project.

District Staff Assignments

An ancillary effect of the wet season across the south, and especially in District 1 has been the opportunity to provide personnel to support the national



Prescribed fire at Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, North Pungo Unit, credit USFWS.

mobilization efforts to respond to an active fire season across the rest of the country.

District 1 had 16 fire staff, three collateral duty, and three ADs respond to 30 different incidents.

During the course of these assignments, Ken Powell was able to complete his ICT4, Anthony Davis completed his FIRB, and Helen Czernik completed both an IBA2 and COST taskbooks, and were signed off as qualified.

Refresher Training for chainsaws, ground ignition, atv operations, and the required annual firefighter safety class (RT-130) was provided for all redcarded personnel. Additionally, employees at Pocosin Lakes NWR conducted a first aid/CPR refresher. All employees completed on-line aviation training, as well as mandated training in computer security and ethics management. Additionally, six employees completed the RT300 prescribed fire refresher.

Training

Employee	Training Taken	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Bonnie Strawser		PIO1	
Helen Czernik			IBA2, COST
Ed Christopher	PFTC, RX301		
Donnie Harris, Amy Midgett, Eric Meekins, Cory Waters	PLDO Refresher		
Ken Powell			ICT4
Anthony Davis			FIRB
Bert Plante	PFTC		
Matt Howle	S230, S231, S270		

The DOI heavy equipment/specialty vehicles class was held at Alligator River NWR in the spring of 2013.

Staffing Changes

The annual budget for the USFWS has required the Service to eliminate filling all but the most necessary positions. This initiative has left District 1 with several vacancies that affect our capacity, including firefighters at Pocosin and Mackay Island NWRs. The District expects to function at these reduced levels for the foreseeable future.

During FY13, the District bade farewell to its longtime DFMO, Tom Crews. While the void has been keenly felt at the District office, we can report that we haven't seen Tom doing anything but smile since his retirement, and we are learning all the best fishing holes! Bert Plante was offered, and accepted, this important leadership position, leaving the District PFS position vacant.

District 2

Overview

This was a year of major changes, and perhaps the most significant was the reorganization of district lines, as District 3 FMO Mike Housh moved to Eglin Air Force Base. Due to budget constraints, and in keeping with the Fire Workforce Plan, the decision was made to redraw District 2 and 3 district boundaries and split the duties of the former District 3 between District 2 (South Carolina) and 4 (North Florida). Now District 2 covers all refuges and hatcheries in South Carolina and Georgia with small holdings in North Carolina and Florida.

With the combining of districts, the coverage now includes 17 refuges and five fish hatcheries encompassing 626,000 acres of Service lands with roughly 550,000 burnable acres. The District currently has 26 fire funded positions with two hub stations (Savannah and Okefenokee) and two stand alone programs (Piedmont and Carolina Sandhills). ACE Basin also has one technician that helps cover the South Carolina Lowcounty Complex.

Another significant change was the loss of the exclusive use helicopter contract that served District 3 as well as many other programs around the Region. The Type 3 contact was heavily used at Okefenokee, Carolina Sandhills and Piedmont Refuges. The loss of a dedicated helioper is a significant blow for our fire operations as well as other refuge activities, for Okefenokee in particular.

At Okefenokee, a great deal of fire rehab continued this year following the 2011 Honey Prairie Fire. The rebuilt boardwalk will be dedicated at a grand opening during the Okefenokee Festival on October 12th. It is now completely plumbed with integrated sprinklers and a large, dedicated well and pump for fire protection. Canoe trail platforms were replaced and many acres of longleaf were planted in areas of high mortality from the 2011 fire. Recovery dollars were also spent on equipment such as roller choppers that will be used by the refuge



Prescribed fire operations at Okefenokee NWR, credit USFWS/Reggie Forcine.

and the state, federal, and other non federal cooperators such as the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners (GOAL) to accomplish fuel reduction work around the swamp to create and improve a fire resistant buffer zone.

Wildfire

Wildfire numbers were low this year with 14 fires spread across seven of the district refuges. Most fires were quite small with Okefenokee having the largest fire of 28 acres. These low numbers were a result of a much wetter year than we have seen for many years. Though mid-winter did have a dry period, February brought in record rains with many areas receiving over 10 inches. Rains were plentiful in June as well and on through most of the summer months. The Okefenokee Swamp is full and has been overflowing for several months in a welcome change from recent drought years.

Fuels Management

Despite many hurdles for the fuels program, the District treated over 16,000 acres in 59 units. While this is far below historic averages, it is respectable given the struggle with budgets, aviation availability, and sequestration. Piedmont NWR is to be commended for being the clear leader in accomplishments despite these struggles.

Piedmont NWR

Piedmont NWR treated 7,862 acres of refuge lands (3,180 acres during the dormant season and 4,682 in the growing season). An additional 163 acres of inholdings or adjacent private and Forest Service lands were burned through the use of Grants of Permission or local MOU's. Crews completed 22 independent ground burns over 15 days of burning. Sequestration forced stoppage on 12 acceptable burn days (based on weather). Despite the fiscal and administrative barriers during the burn season good

fire effects were achieved on the completed prescribed fires. The refuge received prescribed fire assistance on seven burn days from 20 personnel and provided assistance on one day with three personnel. Most of this sharing of resources is done through the use of an Interagency Burn Team MOU within the state of GA.

Okefenokee NWR

No prescribed fires occurred at Okefenokee this year due to administrative delays with the new Fire Management Plan. The plan was finalized and signed in September of 2013 and preparations have been completed to begin burning in the fall.

Savannah/ACE Basin and Coastal Refuges

Combined, the two coastal complexes accomplished 21 prescribed fires treating 6,071 acres. Many of these were freshwater impoundments at Savannah and ACE Basin which were burned in the fall of 2012 providing excellent habitat for wintering waterfowl. Another highlight for the program was a cooperative burn at Waccamaw NWR on Sandy Island with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Through agreements, we have often partnered with TNC to burn the island as we share a common boundary and both manage old growth longleaf for RCW's and associated species in this fire adapted ecosystem.

Carolina Sandhills/PeeDee NWR

Though several priority prescribed fires were completed, production fell far below refuge averages due largely to the timing of sequestration. The refuge completed 16 burn units encompassing just under 3,000 acres. Budget constraints and sequester limitations impacted programs around the region, but Carolina Sandhills felt these impacts more than most. March is typically the peak for prescribed fire and the program was well positioned for success with four seasonal employees on board, trained and ready. The FWS ship helicopter was also scheduled to spend two to four weeks at Carolina Sandhills

Training

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Robert Alonso		S212, CPR/First Aid	ICT4, CRWB	ENGB, HECM
Cory Bryant	RT219F		ATV/UTV	
Rocky Chesser		Heavy Equipment		
Tommy Crews	S215, L280, S290			
Reggie Forcine	IS800, HELM Workshop, I300			
Andy Heisey			RXB2	
Terri Jenkins	P301, P410		PETL	
Nathan Herron	S371		HMGB	
Toby Price				ABRO
Carl Schmidt	B-3, A110			
Matt Smith	S371		HMGB	
Randy McLain				CRWB

to assist with the prescribed fires. Sequestration and associated restrictions resulted in complete stoppage of all burning for nearly a month despite good weather and preparations.

District Staff Assignments

District staff assignments peaked with the national planning level at PL5 in August as the western activity intensified. In total, district personnel dispatched to approximately 31 assignments in 10 states including Alaska and in a wide variety of positions. Savannah Forestry Tech Bert Wyatt spent just over 30 days assigned with the Jackson Hotshots on fires primarily in Arizona. Though Bert was not involved in the Yarnell Hill incident, he was able to attend the Prescott Memorial Service for the Granite Mountain IHC 19 lost tragically in this incident. Refuge Officer Stacey Welch was also in attendance, serving on the FWS Honor Guard. Assignment location information is on the table above.

District staff also coordinated, facilitated and attended numerous refresher trainings (RT130-29, R212-24, UTV/ATV-21, RT271-7, RT300-3, PLDO-6). Mike Housh with help from the Okefenokee fire staff coordinated and instructed at the TN/KY Wildfire Academy this year.

Staffing Changes

District FMO Mike Housh accepted a position at Eglin Air Force Base representing FWS, but working as a liaison between NWCG agencies and the Air Force throughout the nation. Sarah Sorensen from Okefenokee accepted a position with Ecological Services in Tennessee. Forestry Technician Andy Heisey made the move from Savannah to Okefenokee in the spring but is still very much a part of the District.

District 4

Overview

This year saw a major change in District 4 with the addition of eight refuges in Alabama due to the splitting of District 3 when DFMO Mike Housh accepted another position.

FY 2013 started off somewhat dry and then the flood gates opened around the end of May. The next few months were above average on precipitation for the District as a whole. As a result, the number of growing season prescribed fire acres were less than average and the number of wildfires was also very low.

There was a brief but intense period of out of district wildfire assignments occurring at the end of August and into the first week of September.

Other significant fire program activities included bringing a new Type 6 Engine online at Lower Suwannee NWR, and extensive work with Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC) training crews, which allowed for extra manpower to accomplish burns at St. Marks NWR and Lower Suwannee NWR while affording valuable training opportunities for PFTC students.

Wildfire

The number of wildfires was extremely low this year. North Florida experienced minimal wildfire activity due to the abundant moisture. Wheeler NWR recorded the only wildfire in the District, for 0.1 acres. Crews assisted regularly with wildfire suppression on other districts, and traveled for extended periods as detailed below.

Fuels Management

This year was a record low year for acres accomplished in fuels management. This is due to a combination of uncertainty with budget and extremes in weather conditions. The District total prescribed fire treatment was 9,159 acres. St. Marks and Lower Suwannee were the only units in District 4 that completed prescribed fire treatments this year. St. Marks NWR treated 6,529 acres with prescribed fire. These treatment acres



End of a successful day in District 4, credit USFWS.

were split evenly between dormant and growing season. Lower Suwannee burned an additional 2,630 acres, with a similar split. The typical mechanical treatments were accomplished, 52 acres at Lower Suwannee and 109 acres at St Marks NWR. These mechanical treatments are primarily maintenance and clearing of refuge fire lines and boundaries, preparing around Red-Cockaded Woodpecker cavity trees, as well as site preparation for planting and restoration projects. Refuge fire crews also regularly assisted local cooperators with prescribed burn implementation as opportunities permitted.

District Staff Assignments

Twelve people from District 4 went on fire assignments in FY13. Thirty-four resource orders were filled. These assignments ranged from nearby local and in-state refuge assists, western assignments on Type 1 incidents, and assignments to incidents in Puerto Rico.

Training

Due to the uncertainty of the budget, training opportunities were limited. All red-carded individuals in District 4 received the Annual Fire Refresher training. Refresher training sessions

were given at St. Marks and Lower Suwannee to a total of 33 firefighters. This included regular government employees, ADs, and students from the University of Florida, Student Association for Fire Ecology. The aviation and PLDO/Helicopter Crewmember refreshers were also conducted. St. Marks hosted First Aid/CPR training which 16 people attended, while 12 staff attended that training at Lower Suwannee, including all fire crew members. Lower Suwannee also hosted an S-212 wildfire power saws course and refresher.

Staffing Changes

Mike Housh 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. Other staffing changes in the District included the departures of two collateral duty RXCMs: Pamela Garrison, LEO, moved to Okefenokee NWR, and former Crystal River NWRC Deputy Manager Boyd Blihovde left for a manager position at Laguna Atascosa NWR in Texas.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Anthony DiMaggio	S330	SA Engine Academy, S212	RXB2	HECM
Travis Pollard				ENGB
Trixie Smith				HECM
Greg Titus			ATGS	
Vic Doig		S212		

District 5

Overview

FY13 was a busy year for District 5. Wildfire season started off in January with the 902 acre Flora Vista Fire on the St. Johns NWR and continued to be very active through May. Merritt Island NWR Complex continued to respond to at least one wildfire every month through September.

A combination of a lack of project dollars and weather caused the District to have a below average year in the amount of acres treated with prescribed fire.

The District Fire Management Staff put a major emphasis on training in 2013. This included both participating in and instructing courses in and out of the District this year.

Wildfire

District fire management personnel responded to 35 wildfires for just over 6,000 acres this year. Loxahatchee, Lake Woodruff, and Merritt Island NWRs received severity funding in April and May due to the unusually dry conditions in East Central and South Florida.

Refuge	Total Fires	Fires on FWS Lands	FWS Acres
Merritt Island NWR	27	19	4,923
St. Johns NWR	8	4	905
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	1	1	58
Totals	36	24	5,886

Fuels Management

District fire management personnel completed 18 prescribed fire treatments at Loxahatchee, Lake Woodruff and Merritt Island NWRs for 16,682 acres this year. Service personnel assisted with HFR treatments on Florida Keys, Ding Darling, Laguna Cartagena, and Florida Panther NWRs, Canaveral National Seashore, Everglades National Park and the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest.

Refuge	Treatments	Acres
ARM Loxahatchee	2	9,192
Lake Woodruff	8	897
Merritt Island	9	6,593
Totals	19	16,682

Crews completed approximately 20 high priority acres of mechanical WUI treatments on Lake Woodruff and Merritt Island NWRs.

District Staff Assignments

FY13 was an active year for wildfire assignments as the National Preparedness Level reached 5 in August. District 5 personnel stepped up to the need and responded to 17 out of district assignments in 7 states. Ryan Sharpe (14 days), Dave Moran (21 days) and Grant Gifford (60 days) detailed with the Bridgeport Helitack Crew on multiple wildfires in Nevada and California.

District 5 hosted and instructed multiple training courses this year including RT130, RT212 and RT320.

Loxahatchee hosted S-490 and S-491 with Jon Wallace serving as the lead instructor for the courses.

Merritt Island hosted S-133, S-215, S-270, S-336, S-339, and I-300 this year.

Honors, Awards, Committees

Jon Wallace served as the Deputy Regional Fuels Specialist for the U.S. Forest Service Southern Region from October 2012 through March of 2013, served as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy National Fuels Specialist from August 2013 through October 2013, serves as the chair person for the NWCG Fire Danger Committee, and participates in the Southern Regions Fire Environment Committee.

Grant Gifford is a member of a National Fire and Operations Safety Team sub-committee for engine standards.

Staffing Changes

Forestry Technician Joe Sharbaugh accepted a position with a County Fire Department in his home state of Maryland in January.



Center Fire at Merritt Island, credit USFWS

Training

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Cynthia Branham	S491			
Dave Moran		S133, S215		ICT4
Ryan Sharpe	S336, S339	S133, FL Engine Academy		
Paul Koch				ENGB
Grant Gifford	S258, S231, S490	S212, RT-212, S230	COMT	HEMG
Jon Wallace	S495	S490, S491, S212, Advanced NFDRS		OSC2
Chris Wright		S270, Florida Engine Academy		
Ryan Roche	I300, S336		Wildland Fire Investigator and Line Safety Officer	
Jay Mickey	S339	S215, S270, S336, I300		DIVS
Michael Good	S490, S491, S339, S336	S336, I300		DIVS and RXB1
Patrick Pearson		S215, S270, S336, S339, I300	OSC1	

District 6

Overview

FY 2013 proved to be a very active year for District 6 with both wildfire and fuels management. The District had 38 wildfires totaling 2,933 acres spread out over five different Refuges and 15 fuels treatments on four Refuges totaling 5,153 acres.

This year saw the culmination of years of planning with the successful completion of the first prescribed fire at Laguna Cartagena National Wildlife Refuge in Puerto Rico. This achievement was made possible by creating a training platform utilizing the current workforce located in the Caribbean with the support of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S Forest Service (El Yunque NF), and the National Park Service (San Juan National Historic Site). As a result, we were able to successfully treat 200 acres of cattail on the Lagoon and set the stage for future projects and at the same time, enhanced our relationships and gained support from the public.

This year we supported the Caribbean Complex with multiple mobilizations of District and National Park Service fire staff to help with suppression efforts in Cabo Rojo NWR, Laguna Cartagena NWR, and Vieques NWR. We provided James Padilla and Martin Ramos with training opportunities by sending NWCG qualified personnel to provide operational support as well as facilitate their qualification advancement. This is an important function to ensure that our satellite fire staff has an opportunity to develop and improve their fire-line leadership skills and receive the time off they need during extremely active seasons such as FY13. Sending District staff to the Caribbean for fire support strengthened our team. Not only were we able to provide training opportunities for our fire staff, but we also were able to support multiple refuge functions at Cabo Rojo, Laguna, and Vieques NWR's.

FY13 provided many challenges. Our most pressing challenge due to budget reductions was fire staffing on federal



First prescribed burn conducted at Laguna Cartagena NWR, Puerto Rico, credit USFWS/Cass Palmer.

properties in South Florida being reduced below traditional levels. This year every cooperators in South Florida reported fires with high resistance to control, extreme fire behavior with extended burning periods. In April, 2013 our district along with Loxahatchee NWR went in Severity in conjunction with Big Cypress National Preserve (BICY) and Everglades National Park (EVER). In order to make the most effective use of severity funding, we collectively identified a shared mutual response area and the resources needed to augment current staffing levels. We worked hard to ensure not to duplicate ordered resources and to provide a shared initial attack response. In all cases the closest resource concept was utilized when dispatched for initial attack fires regardless of agency boundaries. 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.

The Florida Interagency T3 Team assumed command of the Huckabee Fire on March 29, 2013, which was located in the Deep Lake unit of Big Cypress National Preserve on the western edge. This 22,000 acre wildfire was a success for our team in many ways. We were able to manage an incident much like the Deep Fire in 2009 for a fraction of the cost. The Deep Fire was roughly 30k acres managed by a Type 1 IMT from the Southwest; they managed this incident at an estimated 7 million dollars. The Huckabee Fire at 22k acres was successfully managed at an estimated \$750k. We were able to provide

District 6

continued

multiple training opportunities for local and regional fire staff and at the same time, strengthened our interagency relationship in South Florida.

In light of the Granite Mountain Hotshot tragedy this year, District 6 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; we 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.

Wildfire

District fire management personnel responded to 38 wildfires for just over 2,900 acres this year. Florida Panther and J.N. Ding Darling NWRs received severity funding in April and May due to the unusually dry conditions in East Central and South Florida.

Refuge	Treatments	Acres
Florida Panther	2	9,192
J.N. Ding Darling	8	897
Caribbean Complex	9	6,593
Totals	19	16,682

Of Note

Florida Panther reported 1 natural out for 0.2

Refuge	Total Fires	Fires on FWS Lands	FWS Acres
Florida Panther	2	2	563
J.N. Ding Darling	1	1	.1
National Key Deer	3	1	.1
Caribbean Complex	32	27	2,319
Total	38	31	2,882

Training

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Cass Palmer	Supervisory Training			
Robert Trincado	Supervisory Training	S339		SOFR
Greg Suszek			RXB1	
Dana Cohen	S495	RX301, RX310	DIVS, LTAN	GSAN
James Padilla		S130/190, S211, S212	ICT4	
Paul Ryan		RT 212		
Wesley O'Connor				ICT4, HECM
Paul (PJ) Stevko			TFLD	
Bobby Schat				HECM, ABRO, ICT4
Martin Ramos				ICT5

Fuels Management

District fire management personnel completed 18 prescribed fire treatments at Loxahatchee, Lake Woodruff and Merritt Island NWRs for 16,682 acres this year. Service personnel assisted with HFR treatments on Florida Keys, Ding Darling, Laguna Cartagena, and Florida Panther NWRs, Canaveral National Seashore, Everglades National Park and the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest.

Of Note

District personnel assisted the following Refuges and cooperators with HFR implementation over the course of the year: Big Cypress NPS, Lower Suwannee NWR, Florida Forest Service, Canaveral

National Sea Shore NPS, Ocala National Forest, Loxahatchee NWR, Apalachicola NF, Everglades NPS and Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

District Staff Assignments

FY13 was an active year for wildfire assignments as the National Preparedness Level reached 5 in August. District 6 personnel stepped up to the need and responded to 21 out of district assignments in seven states.

Of Note

RT130 was conducted by and for redcarded personnel.

District 7

Overview

Fire Managers across District 7 used resourcefulness, imagination and creativity in getting the job done despite the uncertainty caused by automatic across-the-board budget cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011. Collateral Duty and Militia firefighters became more important than ever. Implementation of a prescribed fire in an eight-hour day requires smaller burn units, more firelines, a “heavier hand” on the land, and less time for mop-up and smoke patrol. Budget uncertainty may have delayed the start of the prescribed fire season, but an unusually persistent progressive weather pattern allowed the season to continue until mid-June; both of these factors resulted in more growing season burns than usual.

The 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.

The southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana area received a break from drought like conditions that had been impacting Felsenthal, D’Arbonne, Overflow and Ouachita NWRs since 2009. The area experienced normal to above normal winter rains that kept the Keetch Byram Drought Index (KBDI) values at or below 200 between December 2012 and early June 2013. This wetness prevented severity conditions experienced in recent years but also limited prescribed fire opportunities.

Prescribed fire plans were completed that cover 90% of the burnable acreage of the Southwest Louisiana Refuge Complex (SWLA). The fire staff orchestrated an engine swap with Alligator River NWR and PFTC which resulted in an improved initial attack engine for the Complex. SWLA staff also participated in the R4 Aviation Review.



Tony Wilder at Compartment G-07 Prescribed Burn, Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, credit USFWS.

Wildfires

Refuge	Total Fires	Fires on FWS Lands	FWS Acres
N Louisiana	1	1	135
S Arkansas	2	1	1
Gulf Coast	56	11	9
SE Louisiana	14	5	3
SW Louisiana	5	5	8132

Of Note

White River had an 82 acre natural out that burned 61 FWS acres.

Fuels Management

Refuge	Rx Burns	Acres
MS Sandhill Crane	16	2,998
N Louisiana	4	224
Sam D Hamilton Noxubee	19	7,457
SE Louisiana	6	364
S Arkansas	5	893
SW Louisiana	7	16,623

PFS Scott Saucier is working with the MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, the FWS Alabama Ecological Services Office, and TNC on interagency restoration projects that will benefit Gopher Frogs and Gopher Tortoise in

Alabama and Mississippi, through the development of ponds, prescribed fires, and Gopher Frog releases. Scott also completed work with Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) to build approximately four miles of new fire breaks at Grand Bay NWR.

The Sam D Hamilton Noxubee NWR in addition to prescribed fire, also treated 908 acres with herbicide to control invasive woody vegetation and treated 237 acres mechanically.

Southeast Louisiana - The National Wild Turkey Federation provided a grant for prescribed fire at Bogue Chitto NWR. One of the prescribed fires at Big Branch Marsh was funded as part of the burned area rehabilitation from the Murphy fire in 2010 on the Salmen Tract.

Regional Fire Ecologist Sue Wilder and Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR sponsored four fire interns this year. Interns were housed at MSC and worked district and regional fire monitoring projects.

District Staff Assignments

FY13 was an active year for wildfire assignments as the National Preparedness Level reached 5 in August. District 7 personnel stepped up to the need and responded to 51 out of district assignments in 13 states; from Florida to Alaska.

District 7

continued

Training

Even with the limited budgets of FY13, District 7 was still very efficient in quality and quantity of training it facilitated and received.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Jamie Farmer	LA Cert. Burner, FWS ATV, NIMS 400		DIVS, ICT3	
Jon King	NIMS 300			ICT4
Brian Donnelly	S390, NIMS 300, NIMS 400		FIRB	
Shaun Martinet	FWS ATV, NIMS 300		ICT5	
Daniel Davis			FALA	
Lucas Doucet	S130/ 190, I100			
Dan Greenwell			FALA	
Dave Panas			SECM	
Glenn Catoe	L-280, S-131, S-234, IS-200		FALB	FALA
Chris Holland	I-200, IS-700			
Nina Hollenbeck	NSA03, IS-700, IS-800			
Chris LeRouge	I-300			
Matthew Johnson	S212		FALB	FALA
Charlie Marshall				FALA
Bill Burchfield	S212			FALA
Greg Hayes	S212		TPOP	FALA
Paul Reynolds	GIS		OSC1	
Justin Boysen	CRWB,ENGB			FFT1
Brad Bailey	FW401			
James Bates	I-300	FW401, NSA03		
Angie Dedrickson	L-280, S-271, NSA03, FW401		HECM, STOP	
Rebecca Goosman	RT-9016		STOP	
Sami Gray	FW401	S-212		
Josh Havird	N-9022	S-212	ENGB, STOP	FALB
Mike Krebs	DOI Resource Advisor	S-230		STOP
Grant Lovato	S-271		STOP	
Jay McIlwain	IS-700, S-131, S-133		FFT1	
Randall Platt	FW401			ENGB
Bert Rager III	FW401,NSA03, S-260	S-212	ICT4	CRWB, FIRB, STOP
Greg Rolison	FW401		CRWB	
Scott Saucier			STOP	FALA
Burnice Shows	I-300, RT-9016			
'Bunk' Twiss			IADP	
Tony Wilder		S-231		

Of Note

Tony Wilder, IC of the Southern Area Type 1 Red Team, led the IMT on two assignments during FY13. In November the IMT was assigned to New Jersey and Philadelphia during the FEMA response to Superstorm Sandy and in August they responded to the Big Windy fire in Oregon.

Over 129 students received certificates at various refresher trainings largely facilitated by Service personnel including: RT130, RT212, RT300, PLDO, RT219F, RT271 and First Aid/CPR.

Bert Rager and Josh Havird traveled to Tennessee to facilitate an S-212 Chainsaw Course for Reelfoot Lake NWR employees. This training occurred in May and was a huge success.

Mike Krebs assisted The Nature Conservancy (TNC) with the first ever crew boss academy held at Camp Shelby near Hattiesburg, Mississippi. This training gave individuals firsthand experience with single resource responsibilities and had both classroom and field exercises.

Honors, Awards, Committee

District AFMO Sami Gray was selected to participate in the National Incident Business Committee, Employee Common Identifier Subcommittee.

Scott Saucier coordinated with Grand Bay NERR on grant proposals to look at fire effects on vegetation potentially impacted by sea level rise and Mississippi State University on exotic tree research and grant proposals to study the effect of prescribed fire on native plants. Scott also worked with the Regional Office to video-document Grand Bay's preparation work for Deep Water Horizon oil spill restoration funds.

Throughout FY 13 Brad Bailey worked with Denver and county cooperators to update over 40 RFAs and maintain communications as new radio upgrades are being completed.

Staffing Changes

South Arkansas/North Louisiana:

Eddie "Big E" Courson retired in December 2012. South Arkansas received a new Project Leader, Michal Stroeh in November 2012, and a new Deputy Project Leader, Alan Whited in June 2013.

Southwest Louisiana: Larry 'Gator'

Smith accepted a position at the Daniel Boone NF in July 2013.

Sam D Hamilton Noxubee: Forester

Richard Smith retired this year and Joseph Eddie Harsh will be filling the vacancy. Eddie should be an asset for our burning program.

Mississippi Sandhill Crane: In March

John Bell accepted an engine position with BLM in NM and Mike Krebs accepted a job in August with the Jackson County Sheriff's Department as a school resource officer. We wish them both the best as they move forward in their respective careers.

Of Special Note

Bert Rager III became the proud father of a baby boy, Sawyer, born September 4, 2013.

Tony Wilder, veteran District FMO, has announced his retirement for January 2014. This will certainly be the end of an era for Tony, the Region and the FWS.

Regional Office

Overview Wildfire

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 fire season in the Southeast Region was a moderate year with a slight increase in fire activity from last year. Most of the wildfire activity took place in Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. Spring fire season in central and south Florida was very active and both District 5 and 6 experienced record setting fire danger indices. Within the Southeast Region, we responded to 192 wildfires that burned 43,880 acres, of which 17,584 acres were on Service lands. In addition to the regional workload, Service personnel participated in western suppression efforts as single resources or members of Incident Management Teams (IMT) during a very busy western fire season.

District 5 in East Central Florida Central experienced a very busy and spring fire season both on State protected lands and on Federal Lands. In March, the Merritt Island Fire Management Staff responded to several wildfires on FWS lands at Merritt Island NWR. Due to drought conditions these fires were long duration incidents. The decision was made to request severity funding to assist the local fire management staff with initial attack fires as well as provide assistance to these long duration incidents within the complex. The complex was in severity for four weeks. Within those four weeks, the complex experienced 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. It was a tremendous help having these resources present when we needed the assistance.

District 6, South Florida experienced a very active spring fire season both on State protected lands and on Federal Lands. The decision was made to request severity funding to assist the local interagency fire management staff with initial attack fires. The District was in severity for four weeks in cooperation with Everglades NP and Big Cypress



FMO Meeting at Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center in May 2013

National Preserve. Within those four weeks, South Florida fortunately experienced no wildfires on Federal or State Lands. Severity resources however provided the necessary personnel and equipment to assist the local staff as well as our cooperators, and would have been beneficial if the area would have experienced any wildfire activity.

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.

Wildland Urban Interface

Two of the primary DOI WUI wildfire mitigation programs, The Rural Fire Assistance Program and the Ready Reserve Program, received no funding for FY2013. Although no funding was allocated, administrative work was still done on both programs. Namely, ensuring funds obligated in the past were appropriately being utilized and the facilitating the proper closing of some of the grant agreements.

The Southern Group of State Foresters hosted a Southern Area WUI Exchange in Charlottesville, VA. The purpose of the exchange was to share current fire prevention and mitigation efforts

amongst the different entities and begin implementation of the Southern Area WUI & Fire Prevention Strategy. Rick Struhar and Terri Jenkins represented FWS in this effort.

This year the SE Region treated approximately 42,330 acres of hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface.

Training and Qualifications

Rick Struhar had served as Southern Area Training Working Team Vice Chairperson, then Chairperson for the previous four years. This year, the National Park Service has the Chairperson role but Rick will remain committed as a team member. The US Forest Service led the effort on the 2013 Southern Area Advanced Academy in Birmingham, Alabama. A number of FWS fire personnel assisted in the delivery of these courses.

We coordinate with the states in the fire and incident training arena on a variety of levels. Notable, is our involvement in 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 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.

Emergency Stabilization (ES)

In FY 2013, there were no ES plans submitted. Emergency Stabilization work submitted in FY 2012 following the Honey Prairie Fire was completed in April 2013 as planned. Work included removal of hazardous trees along canoe trails open to the public within the swamp.

Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR)

In FY 2013, there were three on-going BAR projects funded: 1) Murphey Fire (Big Branch Marsh NWR), 2) Pains

Bay Fire (Alligator River NWR), and 3) Round Two Fire (Florida Panther NWR).

The Murphey Fire BAR plan is in its final year and plans were funded to complete a prescribed burn and continue to monitor planted tree seedling survival from previous years. All projects were completed and a final report will be available December 2013.

The Pains Bay BAR plan is in its second of three years of funding. In FY 2013 a prescribed burn was scheduled to be completed but weather did not allow for adequate conditions to complete the prescribed burn, however, further treatments of Phragmites was completed this year. In FY2014, additional funds were requested to continue Phragmites treatment, attempt to conduct the prescribed burn that was not able to be conducted in FY2013 and replace a wooden bridge that burned during the wildfire.

The Round Two Fire BAR work was also fully funded in FY2013 to treat the invasive Cabbage Palm Seedlings that emerged following the wildfire. This project is in its first of three years of funding.

Additional BAR plans submitted at the end of FY2013 for FY2014 funding include the Blue Hole Fire BAR plan for a wildfire that occurred on the National Key Deer NWR. Work proposed on this plan includes replacing a burned viewing platform and planting native slash pine trees where high burn severity occurred on the wildfire and the area will not fully recover otherwise.

Planning

New Fire Management Plans were completed and approved during the year for Okefenokee NWR and Alligator River NWR. Annual updates were completed on 49 Fire Management Plans around the region.

Budget

Budget woes continue to challenge the fire program in FY 2013. The FY 2013 budget of \$10.13M represent a 10.3% reductions 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 minimal support and project funding was distributed to the field. FY 2013 was the first year fire did not contribute a sizeable amount of funding towards heavy equipment. Everyone was encouraged to implement cost saving measures and prepare for FY 2014 which is projected to be worse.

Training

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience
Vince Carver		RX-410
Pat Boucher		ROSS training in FL
Sue Wilder	Advanced GIS	FWS GIS Team

Southern Area Coordination Center

The SACC website was updated to better meet the needs of the field. Pat Boucher, Tami Buchanan and Kevin Scasny worked with the contractor to implement transition.

SACC worked closely with the Training Working Team to mobilize numerous priority trainees to many wildfire incidents. It also has re-established the Dispatchers Working Team and Cynthia Branham (Merritt Island NWR) is the FWS representative.

Region Staff Assignments

Sue Wilder, Regional Fire Ecologist, served as Resource Unit Leader on the Southern Area Blue Type 1 IMT on the Rim Fire in California in September 2013.

Regional Office

continued

Pat Boucher went on a fire assignment to Montrose, Colorado and then Durango, Colorado as a Geographical Area Center Coordinator. Pat was also temporarily promoted to the Acting Center Manager position until the new Center Manager, Kai Olsen, arrived.

Josh O'Connor served as a Division Supervisor with the Southern Area Red Type 1 IMT on the Big Windy fire outside of Grants Pass, Oregon.

Pete Kubiak served as an Operations Branch Director with the Southern Area Red Type 1 IMT on the Big Windy fire.

Mike Duett, Director of the Prescribed Fire Training Center, served as Deputy Incident Commander with the Southern Area Blue Type 1 IMT on the Rim Fire in California.

Vince Carver held several fire positions while on Western Fire assignments in August.

Staffing Changes

Phil Weston, the Regional Fire Planner, retired at the end of December 2012.

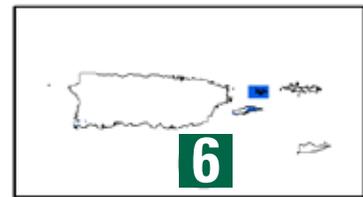
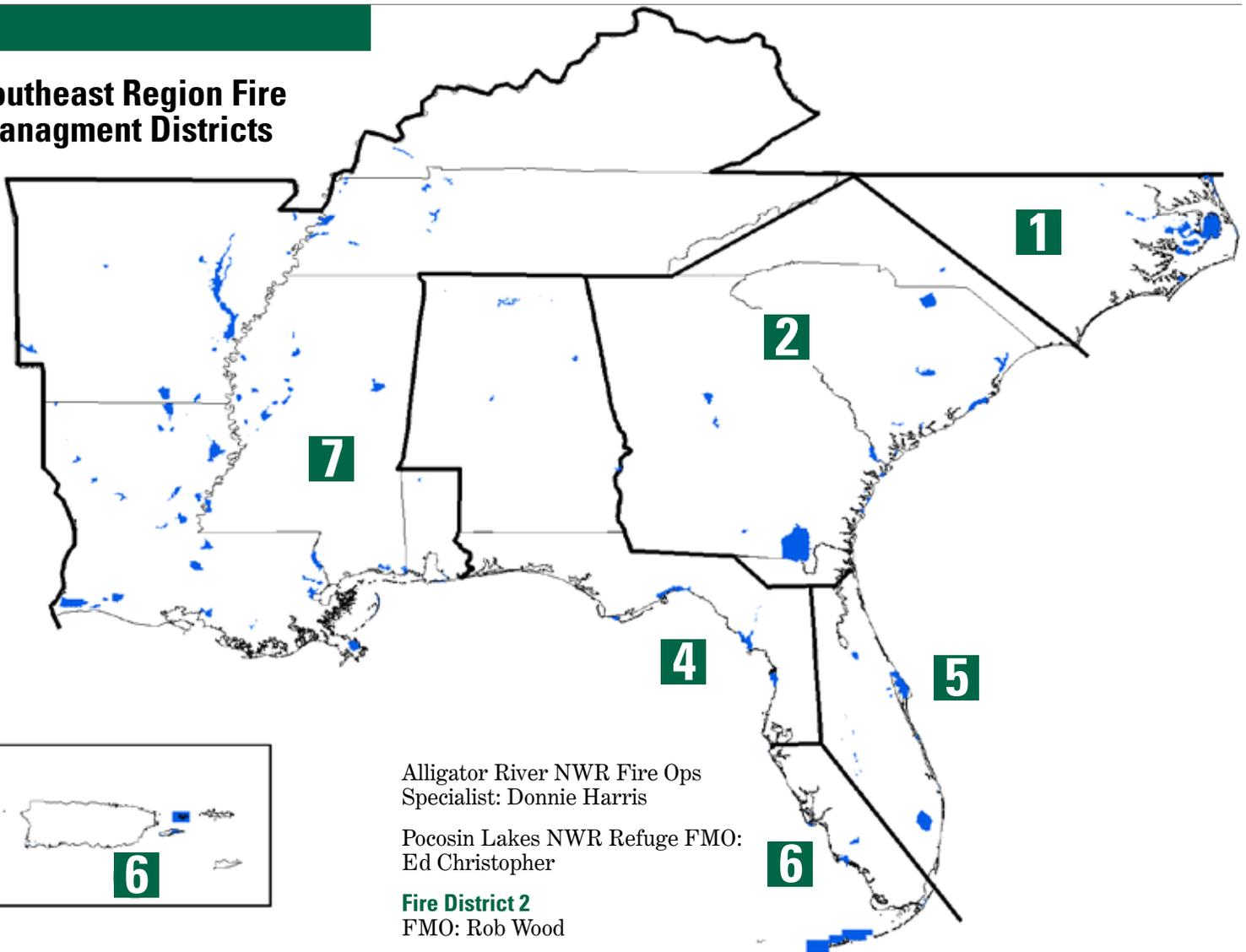
Josh O'Connor was promoted to the Regional Fuel Management Specialist position.

Regional Fire Ecologist Sue Wilder has changed duties and now works 75% of time for Inventory and Monitoring and 25% for Fire Management covering Burned Area Rehab and Emergency Stabilization.



Pine Lilies grow in areas on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge after a fire. The use of prescribed fire on St. Marks NWR keeps the pine lilies from being shaded out by competitors like saw-palmetto, credit USFWS/Jennifer Hinckley.

Southeast Region Fire Management Districts



Southeast Regional Fire Office (Atlanta)

Regional Fire Management Coordinator:
Pete Kubiak

Deputy Regional Fire Management
Coordinator: Vince Carver

Regional Prescribed Fire Coordinator:
Josh O'Connor

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

Regional Fire Office Assistant:
Margaret Hale

Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC)

SACC Assistant Coordinator:
Pat Boucher

SACC Meteorologist: Kevin Scasny

Tallahassee Regional Fire Office (TLH)

Prescribed Fire Training Center
Director: Mike Dueitt

Slidell Regional Fire Staff (SLI)

Regional Fire Ecologist: Sue Wilder

Fire District 1

FMO: Bert Plante

Alligator River NWR Fire Ops
Specialist: Donnie Harris

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

Okefenokee NWR Forestry Tech (Fuels):
Reggie Forcine

Piedmont NWR PFS: John Mason

Fire District 4

FMO: Greg Titus

St Marks NWR District PFS (WUI):
Jennifer Hinckley

Lead Fire Tech: Joey Lord

Lower Suwannee NWR Refuge FMO:
Victor Doig

Fire District 5

FMO: Patrick Pearson

Merritt Island NWR Regional Aviation
Coordinator: Glen Cullingford

PFS (MIR): Michael Good

Wildland Fire Supervisory Officer:
Jay Mickey

ARM Loxahatchee NWR PFS (LXR):
Jon Wallace

Fire District 6

FMO: Cass Palmer

PFS (FPR): 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

District PFS: Scott Saucier

Southwest Louisiana Complex FMO:
Jamie Farmer

Southeast Louisiana Complex FMO:
vacant

Noxubee NWR FMO: Paul Roberts

Felsenthal FMO: Matthew Johnson

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>
January 2014



Keeping Fire on Our Side

For thousands of years, humans have had an active partnership with fire. When respected and managed with care, fire can be a beneficial ally rather than an awesome opponent. Thoughtful preparation and action by public managers and private property owners can help keep fire's effects positive. Together, we can keep fire on our side.

