

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Southeast Region
Fire Division Report FY2015





From the Chief

When I reflect on FY15, and what the Southeast's fire program accomplished... it was a good year. Our fire managers effectively used their limited resources, aggressively took advantage of favorable weather to conduct prescribed burns, efficiently used various strategies to suppress unwanted wildfires, and gained capacity by developing and growing relationships with partners. Most importantly, we did it safely with no reported injuries.

It is rewarding to work with a team of professionals who have a solid understanding of wildland fire and the critical role it plays in the Service's mission of conservation. We can also be proud of the fact that our wildfire response is very cohesive with other agencies sharing suppression responsibilities. Proof of this fact is the rarity of only one agency responding to a fire on, or threatening Service lands. We do an excellent job of collaborating with the various partners that share our conservation and protection values.

Thank you for prioritizing safety in your operations. The U.S. Forest Service experienced a tragic helicopter accident in Mississippi this year that brought to reality the dangers of our profession. We must continue to be vigilant in mitigating risk when practical and if the risk cannot be mitigated or is too great, then we adjust our strategies accordingly. I pray we never have to face a tragedy, but our jobs are inherently dangerous and we should be prepared.

Cover: On January 8, 2015 Lower Suwanee NWR conducted a 407 acre prescribed fire in Levy County, Florida with the assistance of the Florida DEP. The prescribed fire helps reduce the risk of wildfire to the local community of Fowlers Bluff while improving wildlife habitat, credit USFWS.

Left: Aerial photo from the Last Dance Fire in May 2015 at ARM Loxahatchee NWR, credit USFWS.



Prescribed fire at Sabine NWR, credit USFWS/Jamie Farmer.

The uncertainty of the fire budget continues to create challenges. The FY15 budget was still well below the funding levels of 2009-10, but with the effects of workforce planning and slight uptick in funding from FY14, we had working capital that was used judiciously to accomplish most of the priority treatments. FY16 forecasts are by no means encouraging, but we are a resilient program that will always strive to do the right thing for the protection of our resources.

Thanks to all who contributed to a successful and safe year.

District 1

Year Overview

District 1 encompasses the National Wildlife Refuges located in North Carolina, with fire staff located at three of those refuges in the central portion of the District. While the District was fortunate not to have experienced any serious coastal storms during FY15, our weather was characterized by regular sunny and dry periods punctuated by regular rain events. Due to this pattern, we experienced very few periods of high danger and associated severity. This also reduced the accumulative dryness of the deep organic soils found across the District.

As a result of the general unavailability of those ground fuels, we were able to complete more prescribed burning than we have in recent years. Additionally, we experienced no large wildfires, and personnel from the District were available to respond to off-refuge requests for assistance.

Additionally, the District is in the process of formally improving our cooperation with the coastal units of the National Park Service; increasing our commitment to maintaining fuel breaks and conducting joint prescribed fire operations.

Wildfire

Managing fire for resource benefit is difficult in the district. Traditionally, fires that burn larger areas tend to involve the ground fuels, benefitting nothing and increasing resistance to control. Therefore, we have found that our preferred method of attack is to attempt direct tactics where feasible, and rely on complete suppression to limit resource damage. We assess resource benefit considerations on each fire, but have not been able to take advantage of any opportunities during the past several years.

Wildfire response across District 1 was light last year; encompassing seven fires on Service lands consuming 88.5 acres. Additionally, we responded to several threat fires including the Little

Kinnakeet Fire located on NPS lands within the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. This fire required more than two weeks of daily operations even though it only burned 11 acres.

Fuels Management

Weather and organizational conditions improved during FY15 allowing District personnel increased opportunities to conduct fuel management projects. While the number of projects conducted equaled our totals during FY14, we were able to complete 11 prescribed fires totaling 10,200 acres at Alligator River, Pocosin Lakes, Cedar Island, Mackay Island and Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuges. The number of acres burned represents a significant increase compared to the total acres treated during the previous several years.

During 2015, personnel from the District assisted the FWS and DOD with prescribed fires in Virginia and South Carolina. We were able to plan and prepare for a prescribed fire on NPS property amounting to over 1500 acres adjacent to the community of South Nags Head; however, management and environmental constraints prevented us from completion of the project. We expect to be able to assist them on several projects in the coming year. We are



USFWS firefighters prepare to begin a prescribed fire at Cedar Island NWR, credit USFWS.

now exploring opportunities to increase cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Parks as well as the North Carolina Forest Service to conduct burns on their property within the District.

District Staff Assignments

In part, due to a damp summer, we had nine members of our fire crew accept 20 assignments covering 287 days from the mountains of western North Carolina, the swamps of southern Florida, the black spruce of Alaska and across the Pacific Northwest and California. Several Task Books were initiated or completed during these assignments.

Training

During 2015 all firefighting personnel attended RT 130 training. Additionally, firefighters from the NPS and NCFS were invited and attended. Refresher training was also conducted for all personnel requiring chainsaw, helicopter crew and manager, and plastic sphere dispensing. In addition, several of the district's fire crew are members of various IMTs and attended the team meetings held in early spring.

A mass volume water handling class was conducted in conjunction with the Great Dismal Swamp NWR in Virginia. The fire crew was involved both as instructors

and students. A water ditching class was conducted for 14 students at the YMCA pool in Nags Head.

Members of the district were able to attend advanced leadership training: Cory Waters participated in the Dude Fire staff ride, Ed Christopher attended the Shiloh staff ride, and Bert Plante was included in both Shiloh and Gettysburg.

Of Note

Cory Waters is now chair of the Interagency Aerial Ignition Committee of the NWCG and is involved with updating pertinent sections of the IHOG as well as setting national standards in the use of aircraft in ignition operations.

Lisa Meekins maintains qualifications as a fully qualified EMT with the state of North Carolina, a task that requires much training and dedication.

At the beginning of the fiscal year, Bert Plante was appointed to the board of governors of the Joint Fire Science Program as the national USFWS representative.

Due to staffing reductions across all aspects of the refuges in the District, we are involved with many supporting operations such as routine maintenance on various refuges, building duck and photo blinds, and even turtle patrol.

District 1 staff is working closely with the NPS aviation program headquartered at Fort Raleigh in training the new Service pilot on station here. We have been heavily involved in radio and communications setup and training, as well as hosting their pilot to orient him to our operations, both day-to-day as well as emergent.

Staffing Changes

During 2015 we lost Ed Christopher as FMO at Pocosin Lakes NWR to the national office working with cooperators nationwide on smoke management issues. We also lost our AO and financial wizard Helen Czernik to the National Office. While we wish them both the very best, life in the District is definitely not the same.



USFWS firefighters Amy Midgett and Jon Powers use an airboat for ignition on a prescribed fire at Mackay Island NWR, credit USFWS.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Bert Plante	L-481 Shiloh, -581 Gettysburg, Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling		LOFR	
Melvin Walston	Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling			RXB2, FAL3
Anthony Davis	Adv. Water Handling		FAL2	HEQB, FAL3
Ed Christopher	L-481 Shiloh	S-230, -330, -491, RX-410, Adv. Water Handling	FBAN	
Kenny Powell	Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling			COMT
Lisa Meekins	EMT, FDUL, Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling		ORDM	RCDM
Amy Midgett	Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling			
Eric Meekins	Water Ditching			
Cory Waters	Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling, L-481 Dude Fire	A-225, IAT, A-110		HEB2
Donnie Harris	Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling			
Linwood Beckwith			ENGB	STOP
Bonnie Strawser				PIO1
Helen Czernik			FSC2	
Jeff Swain	Water Ditching, Adv. Water Handling			
Brian VanDruten	Water Ditching		ENGB	ICT5

District 2

Year Overview

District 2 covers fire management needs for all Service lands in Georgia and South Carolina and hosts fire resources at five stations across the district.

Wildfire

As was the case for most of the region, we had a very wet year with wildfire numbers below historical averages. We finished the year with 19 wildfires on refuge with almost half of those at Okefenokee. Carolina Sandhills, which normally is at the top of the list for wildfire occurrence, went all season without a start for the first time in many years.

During a rare dry June, and thanks to some strong lightning storms, Okefenokee did have a number of wildfires, as well as initial attack needs, that were rolled into the “Cowhouse Complex.” The Cowhouse Complex became the first assignment for our South Atlantic Type 3 Team. The entire fire district provided support for this incident, with additional FWS assistance mobilized from District 5 and from as far away as Texas and Louisiana. During Cowhouse, the FWS Helicopter was also mobilized for wildfire and initial attack support. This assignment proved to be an excellent learning and preparedness check for the helicopter, as we were able to identify areas of FWS aviation support that needed updating and attention. The incident itself was an excellent learning opportunity and was utilized extensively for personnel training and preparedness improvement.

Blackbeard Island NWR had two fires this year that because of location were able to be managed with minimal suppression activities and monitored for resource benefit. The islands often get lightning start fires in the growing season and if there is no threat to resources, the preferred action is to monitor and allow for the natural progression of the fire. The larger of the two fires was in the wilderness area and it burned through almost all of those wilderness acres that



USFWS along with Americorp Veteran Corps. firefighters conduct a prescribed fire at Okefenokee NWR in February 2015, credit USFWS/Reggie Forcine.

did not burn last year in the Wilderness 14 fire. Where it did burn to last year’s fire perimeter, the fire went out on its own. It is widely agreed that these two fires proved to be of more benefit than harm to the resource. Also, since minimal staffing is needed for monitoring, fire cost is kept low for these incidents.

Fuels Management

2015 proved challenging for finding good weather windows for burning and as a result our numbers were far below the high point set last year. District-wide there were 18,561 acres treated in 65 individual treatment units. Piedmont was the standout exception to a slow year with 9,113 acres burned and all their targets accomplished. Carolina Sandhills/Pee Dee ended the year at 5,240 acres, Okefenokee at 1,275, and the coastal refuges combined for 2,983 acres.

The big news in fuels this year was the announcement of a DOI Wildland Fire Resilient Landscapes Program funding for Longleaf Pine Management in the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC). This funding will be used for longleaf pine conversion, and longleaf habitat management, on and off DOI lands within the SALCC footprint. We will certainly see a big benefit at Carolina Sandhills and Okefenokee in particular. The grant is in partnership with NPS and BLM, with most of the funding utilized by the

Fish and Wildlife Service as the lead DOI landowner of longleaf pine habitat within the South Atlantic LCC. The new funds have already been allocated to an aviation contract that will assist in burning longleaf across the South Atlantic. Temporary fire crew members will be hired at Carolina Sandhills and Okefenokee. The funding will enable us to hire seven seasonal firefighters on the District, four at Carolina Sandhills and three at Okefenokee in 2016.

Okefenokee did have an escaped prescribed fire, which moved onto private property, for four acres burned outside of the prescribed unit. There was no resource damage associated with the escape to refuge or private property. The District assembled an interagency review team to provide unbiased analysis of the escape. The resulting report, findings, and after action review provided a positive “teachable moment” environment for all involved.

District Staff Assignments

As always, our fire folks were busy moving around to support priority needs based on seasonal activity and local, regional, and national fire danger. Almost all fire staff had an off station assignment, and a few individuals had multiple assignments. With all of the activity, fire staff had excellent opportunities to work on task book experience, with several individuals completing taskbooks.

Okefenokee and Savannah both sent fire staff on detail assignments to Region 3 in Minnesota to assist with their prescribed burning targets. The detail to Region 3 was a great opportunity for our folks to get experience in new areas and further develop their prescribed fire skillset.

Of Note

This year the district continued to work closely with District 5 and other partners to facilitate the South Atlantic Type3 Incident Management Team. Pat Pearson at Merritt Island NWR serves as the primary IC, with both districts providing staff members involved in team duties. The team got together for the first time in November of 2014 for a team sandtable exercise at Cumberland Island NP. The team exercise was a big success. The primary team consists of members from the Okefenokee and Merritt Island NWRs, Osceola NF, and Cumberland Island NP staffs, with the team C&G supported by many other partners. The first actual deployment was at Okefenokee for the Type 3 Cowhouse Complex wildfire in June. IC Pearson provided excellent leadership as local staff was stretched far beyond initial attack. FWS support mobilized from as far away as Texas and Louisiana. We sincerely appreciate all who supported us during this incident.

Okefenokee has been heavily involved with the Baker County Florida Fire Adapted Community and the national Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network. Okefenokee is a major partner in the interagency steering committee leading the FAC and Firewise projects for the county. As one of just a handful of FACs in the eastern United States, the group continues to make strides in contracting and training local veterans to perform home assessments for better protection from wildland fire. A permanent Firewise coordinator will soon be hired by the Baker County Fire Department as a part of this program.

Honors, Awards, Committees

The big news for awards this year would go to Okefenokee along with many of

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	Off-Station Assignments
Brantley Boatright					GA, FICC, SACC
Cory Bryant					GA, AK(x2), MT
Rocky Chesser	A-100, A-107, A,104, M-581, Staff Ride		EQPM, SOFR	DIVS	GA
Tommy Crews					GA
Reggie Forcine					GA, CA
Andy Heisey	I-300, I-400, RX-410, A-110		TFLD		GA, FL, CA, NV, ID, MN
Terri Jenkins				PETL, RESL	GA, AZ, ID
Fed Privett	A-110, A-200, S-258		COMT		GA, CA
Nathan Herron	L-380		HMGB	RXB2	CA, ID
Toby Price	RT				FL, GA, CA, ID
John Mason				ASGS	FL, GA, AK, CA, ID
Carl Schmidt					CA, GA
Wayne Smith					
Matt Smith			HMGB	FAL2, ENGB	GA, CA, WA
Randy McLain					CA
Derrick Odegard					CA
Mark Parker		S-212			GA
Charles Johnson					GA
Adam McCullough	I-300, I-400	S-212	STHQ, TFLD	RXB2	CA, ID, MN
Keith Penrose		S-212			ID
Matt Sutkowski		S-212			CA, GA
Bert Wyatt	I-300, I-400		ICT4		CA, GA
Rob Wood		S-212			ID, GA

their partners that make up the South Georgia North Florida Fire Initiative as they were announced the winners of the 2015 Pulaski Award. It should be noted that GOAL (Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners), of which the refuge has been an integral part since its inception, was given the Pulaski Award in 2005. To receive the award again ten years later is quite an honor. The Pulaski Award is a national award for excellence in firefighting, fire safety, and interagency cooperation within the firefighting community. The South Georgia North Florida Fire initiative includes GOAL, but adds a number of local community stakeholders as well as

NGOs with an interest in fire and fuels management, and education and wildfire preparedness. This group has become effective in keeping up with progressive fire management in a time of declining federal budgets.

Congratulations to Reggie Forcine from Okefenokee for receiving the 2014 Regional Fire Leadership Award. Great work Reggie.

Staffing Changes

Staff changes were few this year, but we did bid farewell to Forestry Tech Tommy Crews at Okefenokee and were able to hire long time Forestry Tech Reggie Forcine as AFMO at Okefenokee.

District 4



St. Marks NWR pathways intern Jason Candeto assists on a prescribed fire at St. Marks NWR Ochlockonee River State Park. credit: USFWS/Jennifer Hinckley.

maintenance and clearing of firelines and boundary lines).

District Staff Assignments

This was a very busy year for out of area assignments. Twenty people from District 4 went on over 40 assignments to 12 different states. District 4 has five members on Southern Area IMTs: Gold Team, Hinckley-PSC2, Vehrs-SECM, Edwards-CTSP(t) and Blue Team, Doig-DIVS(t), Titus-SITL(t).

Training

All red-carded personnel attended RT130 and S-212 refresher trainings. I-300 was conducted at St. Marks NWR.

Of Note

New equipment was brought online: Lower Suwannee NWR outfitted a new IA fire dozer/transport and burn support trailer and St. Marks NWR outfitted a new type 6 engine.

Fire management staff also contributed heavily to general refuge projects including biological monitoring, maintenance, exotic vegetation control, reforestation, facility construction, and visitor services and outreach.

Wildland fire outreach consisted of many venues from a float in the Springtime Tallahassee parade to presentations at Refuge festivals, local schools and the League of Environmental Educators of Florida mini-conference.

Jennifer Hinckley, along with Jon Wallace and Robert Trincado, produced a spatial fire management plan for the 45th Space Wing at Cape Canaveral Air Force Base.

District 4 hosted the SCA Veterans Fire Crew for two weeks and provided S-131 and S-133 training and prescribed fire experience. A PFTC module burned with St. Marks NWR. Lower Suwannee NWR provided experience and training for eight University of Florida SAFE volunteers.

Honors, Awards, Committees

Bart Rye won the USFWS National Fire Safety Award for use of GPS tracking devices during wildland fire operations.

Vic Doig serves on the Steering Committee for the Southern Area Engine Academy. Jennifer Hinckley serves on the North FL Rx Fire Steering Committee.

Staffing Changes

Meagan Bieber was hired for the temporary dispatch position at FICC. Jason Candeto came on board in the Fire Pathways position at St. Marks NWR. Dalton Pelt and Reid Tilley were hired into 180 day hires using Resilient Landscape funding. Josh Havird transferred from Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR into the vacant Equipment Operator position at Lower Suwannee NWR. Forestry Technician Jaclyn Solodovnick, Lower Suwannee NWR, resigned from the Service to pursue opportunities in Nevada. Equipment Operator (Fire) Pelt left Lower Suwannee NWR for a promotion back to his old stomping grounds at Loxahatchee NWR. David Murphy, Refuge LEO and collateral duty FFT1, transferred to Lower Suwannee NWR.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	Off Station Assignments
Anthony DiMaggio	Fla Cert Rx Class, L-580	SA Engine Academy	TFLD, HEQB	RXB2	MN, GA, CA
Bart Rye					FL, ID
Brian Pippin		S-131/133	HMGB	FIRB	MN, GA, FL, CA, NV, ID, WA
Chris Lewzader			HECM		CA
Dale Shiver					MN
David Moody					ID
George Pelt				FIRB	
Greg Titus			SITL		WA
Jennifer Hinckley	L-580	I-300	ICT3, PSC1	TFLD	FL, AK, NC, MT, GA
Jason Vehrs					AK, MT
Joey Lord					FL, WA
John Edwards					FL, NC
Josh Havird		S130/190			GA, AL
Larry Woodward					WA
Meagan Bieber				EDRC	
Reid Tilley					WA
Travis Pollard			GISS		MN, WA
Trixie Smith		S-131/133	HMGB, RXB2, TFLD	ICT4	FL
Vic Doig	Dude Fire Staff Ride	RT130, PLDO	DIVS		AD
Willie Lindsey					AL



St. Marks NWR prescribed burning since before the arrival of the Niña and Pinta, credit: USFWS/Jennifer Hinckley.

District 5

Year Overview

FY 15 was a good year for District 5. Wildfire season started off slow, but picked up in March and April and the District stayed dry through July which is not typical. We had several small fires throughout the District with large fires on Loxahatchee NWR and Merritt Island NWR this year.

The District Fire Management Staff was able to implement prescribed fires on almost all of the refuges in the District this year.

The District Fire Management Staff put a major emphasis on training and qualifications in 2015. Not only for fire funded personnel, but collateral non-fire funded personnel as well. This included both participating in and instructing courses, off District assignments, and details this year.

Wildfire

District fire management personnel responded to 42 wildfires throughout the District this year. We had wildfires on most Refuges within the District this year. The majority of the fires were small in size, but we did have large fires fire events on Loxahatchee and Merritt Island this year, total Service acres burned in all wildfires this year was 19,278.

Fuels Management

We implemented the first prescribed fire in several years at Hobe Sound NWR. This was the highlight of many complex Type 1 burns that were successfully implemented throughout the District this year. We managed to implement prescribed fires on all the Refuges that had prescribed fires scheduled for this year. We also assisted with prescribed fires at Florida Panther and with the U.S. Air Force at Canaveral Air Force Station, MacDill Air Force Base, and Avon Park Bombing Range.

District Staff Assignments

District personnel spent approximately 403 days on out of district assignments in the following states: CA, WA, TX, GA,



USFWS firefighters conducting a prescribed fire at Lake Wales Ridge NWR in May 2015, credit: USFWS/Patrick Pearson.

OR, IA, FL and Puerto Rico. Merritt Island and Loxahatchee both sent overhead and engine support to Oregon and Southeast Washington to assist in Sage Grouse habitat protection.

Many personnel within the District were able to complete task books this year and gain valuable experience in many different fuel types. In addition to receiving training this year, District personnel gained instructor experience this year as well.

Of Note

In addition to District 5 fire funded personnel, non-fire funded personnel also assisted with 77 days of off district assignments and completed much needed task books for the District.

District 5 worked with Brevard and Volusia Counties to provide 10 wildland fire courses this year to over 160 students. Several personnel assisted with instructing at the Central Florida engine academy hosted by the Florida Forest Service, Brevard County and Volusia County.



USFWS firefighters conducting a prescribed fire at Hobe Sound NWR on Valentines Day 2015, credit: USFWS/Patrick Pearson.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Grant Gifford	I-300 L-580 Shiloh Staff Ride			TFLD, RXB2
Ryan Sharpe	L-580 Shiloh Staff Ride, Dude Fire Staff Ride	S-212, Engine Academy	DIVS	HEMG
Dave Moran	I-300, I-400	S-212, Engine Academy	RXB2	
Robert Alonso	I-300, I-400, S-359	S-212, Engine Academy	ICT4	
Wes Alley				
Chris Wright		S-212, Engine Academy		
Jay Mickey	S-300	S-336, S-215, S-200, S-330	RXB1	ENGB
Michael Good	S-300		ICT3	ICT3
Patrick Pearson		S-300, S-336, S-330, S-200, S-215, L-580 Cadre	OPSC 1	

District 5 also worked with Brevard County to send their firefighters out West on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service engines with our District leadership. This worked extremely well this year and everyone gained a tremendous knowledge of fuels and fire behavior out West. Their personnel assisted on assignments to Texas and Washington.

Honors, Awards, Committees

Grant Gifford is a member of a National Fire and Operations Safety Team sub-committee for engine standards and is working as the Regional radio

coordinator. In addition to those duties, Grant filled in as the Regional Helicopter Manager for the service ship for over two months this year.

Candice Stevenson received the Regional Outreach Award for her efforts in fire outreach and public information throughout District 5 and the Region.

Staffing Changes

District 5 lost Jon Wallace to the Regional Office in August.

We also lost Dave Moran to the maintenance staff at Merritt Island.

We have filled the Loxahatchee FMO position with Tom Ledbetter from the U.S. Forest Service in Virginia.

District 6

Year Overview

2015 proved to be a very challenging and active year for the District with both wildfire and fuels management. This year saw the result of years of planning with the successful merging of fire programs between our National Park Service neighbors at Big Cypress National Preserve and the Florida Panther NWR. Both agencies are dealing with budget reductions and staffing shortages, but by working together we became more resilient to these challenges and figured out a way to weather the storm.

We successfully hired a co-funded, shared Assistant Fire Management Officer and are exploring other options to become more efficient with future staffing. We're very proud of all the tremendous work our staff has accomplished during some of the most challenging times I've experienced in my career.

Wildfire

The Southwest Florida Interagency Fire and Aviation program worked together to suppress a total of 61 wildfires within the Southwest Florida District, the largest was the "Mud Lake Complex." This wildfire was eventually managed by two of the Southern Area's Incident Management Teams. During the busy fire season our staff also provided support to Merritt Island NWR, Loxahatchee, Fakahatchee Strand State Park and Picayune Strand State Forest. District staff, along with assistance from other Districts within the region, assisted the Caribbean Complex while they were in severity this August /September on a total of 44 wildfires.

Fuels Management

Even with the extended wildfire season, District fire management personnel completed 11 prescribed fire treatments on Florida Panther NWR for 5,475 acres this year. Through a grant from the National Wild Turkey Federation, three additional prescribed fires were completed on Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge for 950 acres. Favorable conditions played a role in getting these

Employee	Training Taken	Taskbooks Completed
Greg Suszek	M3	
Martin Ramos		CRWB
Bobby Schat	L-381	TFLD
Ryan McLellan	Engine Academy, S211, Heavy Equipment, S131	
Connor Bowden	Engine Academy, S211, Heavy Equipment, S131	

acres treated, but much credit goes to the teamwork of our interagency relationships.

The 489 acres of mechanical treatments across the District were for maintenance of fire lines, including preparation of Florida Bonneted Bat Roost, and the mechanical treatment to reduce fuels in the woods at National Key Deer. This mechanical work at Key Deer will help to reduce fire intensities when follow-up prescribed burns are implemented this winter. The mechanical work and prescribed fire planning work in the

Keys this year has been paid for using grant money for the Bartram's Scrub Hairstreak butterfly.

District 6 personnel assisted the following refuges and cooperators with Hazardous Fuels Reduction over the course of the year: Loxahatchee, Hobe Sound and Merritt Island NWRs, Apalachicola National Forest, Big Cypress National Preserve, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and Picayune Strand State Forest.



FWS sponsored Puerto Rican handcrew on their first deployment for 2015 on the Mud Lake Complex, credit: USFWS.



Florida Panther NWR Swamp Buggy on the 13 Mile Fire at Big Cypress NP, credit USFWS/Connor Bowden.

District Staff Assignments

Fire staff stayed busy in Florida and the Caribbean with a few breaks for details out west.

Wesley O'Connor assisted fire operations and ICT4 for District 7 at Big Branch NWR. Martin Ramos was on a fire assignment to Idaho as CRWB. Greg Suszek was on a fire assignment to Montana and Idaho as DIVS and 21-day detail for the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Reservation as Helicopter Manager.

Also in the Caribbean, for the first time in a very long time, we successfully mobilized 4 type II IA crews to western wildfire support. The first mobilization took place with the "Mud lake" fire in South Florida.

All red-carded personnel received annual refresher (RT-130) and RT-212, RT-271, Pumps refresher and PLDO were offered for those personnel needing those refresher trainings.

Of Note

District 6 established Advanced Life Support (ALS) protocols for the fire program. Working with the Collier County Medical Director, we were granted permission to utilize local paramedics as AD firefighters to provide ALS on prescribed fire and wildland fire operations. In most cases, these operations are located in remote areas of South Florida with medical response times taking several hours. Having ALS on scene will maximize response time, promptly stabilize the scene and establish the safest possible environment for our fire staff.

Honors, Awards, Committees

This year the District worked with multiple interagency counterparts in the Caribbean to establish the first chartered Caribbean Red Card Committee. This working group will oversee the training and qualifications for the interagency fire program in Puerto Rico and will maintain fire qualification records. As of now, the committee's first meeting is December 11, 2015.

Staffing Changes

Justin Turnbo was hired as our co-funded Assistant Fire Management Officer shared by Florida Panther and Big Cypress National Preserve.

James Padilla at Cabo Rojo NWR accepted the position of Fire Operations Supervisor.

District 7

Year Overview

FY2015 began with a Severity Request for the coastal refuges of District 7, and ended with a Severity Request for the inland refuges. During the midyear, sufficient rainfall occurred to allow most of the prescribed fire programs in the District to exceed their 10-year averages in acres burned. Under the guidance of District FMO Sami Gray, intra-district assistance and cooperation were the key to success, as each station contributed detailers and collateral duty firefighters to the effort.

The SCA Veterans Crew was an important part of the mix during their one-month residence at Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR (MS-MSR). They participated in prescribed fires totaling 772 acres at MS-MSR and at Bogue Chitto NWR, 45 acres of chainsaw work in savannas, and several other projects at the Gulf Coast NWR Complex.

The Gulf Coast NWR Complex partnered with the Mississippi Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Parks, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, and the Stennis Center in developing interagency projects funded by the Restore Act which resulted from the BP oil spill in 2011. Grant proposals have been approved and will include a two-year fire crew and fireline construction at Grand Bay NWR, among other projects.

Wildfire

The customary season ending event usually occurs around the end of October along the Central Gulf Coast. The moisture was a couple of weeks late arriving in 2014, so the Highway 613 Fire at Grand Bay NWR filled the vacuum on Halloween. By the time the fire was contained on All Saints Day, it had grown to 547 acres and was threatening the residential community of Helena, Mississippi. Resources from MS-MSR, Southeast Louisiana Complex(SELA), Southwest Louisiana Complex(SWLA), Sam D. Hamilton

Noxubee NWR(MS-NXR), Felsenthal NWR(AR-FSR), Piedmont NWR(GA-PDR), the MS Forestry Commission, the National Forests in Mississippi, and the Natchez Trace Parkway assisted in the suppression effort.

Wildfire activity was moderate for the remainder of FY15 in District 7. Lightning fires were a significant factor at Bayou Sauvage NWR and Sabine NWR, along with a rare lightning fire at MS-MSR. Suppression of the Bayou Sauvage wildfires was possible through the combined help of District 7 FWS personnel, with support from the New Orleans Fire Department.

Fuels Management

It was a good year for prescribed fire in District 7. Most refuges accomplished above average prescribed fire treatment acres. Resources from around the District assisted with the first prescribed fire at Bon Secour NWR in ten years. Logistical factors alone are always a daunting prospect at this remote location on the Alabama Gulf Coast.

Another location that conducted a prescribed fire for the first time in a while was Tensas NWR in northeast Louisiana. Resources from Felsenthal, D'Arbonne and SDH Noxubee NWRs implemented a 67-acre Rx burn in the McLemore Moist Soil Unit 3 to promote woodcock habitat.

At Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR, 2015 was an unusual wet year through most of the prescribed fire season. Only half of the acres that were planned to be treated were completed; with poor weather for burning, fire staff was able to concentrate on other projects. The refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Habitat Management Plan (HMP) was signed off this year and fire staff began marking timber for sales. Old fields were prepped for planting in Loblolly Pines for additional acres of RCW habitat.

This was a busy year for prescribed fire in Southwest Louisiana. There were a total of 16 prescribed fires for 22,942.5 acres on

the Southwest Louisiana NWR Complex. The vast majority of fire treated acres were on Sabine NWR (22,650 acres), but Cameron Prairie NWR and Lacassine NWR had 121.5 and 171 acres treated respectively.

Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR took advantage of every possible opportunity to conduct prescribed fires, and ended up above average with nearly 6,000 acres burned by hand. This is quite an accomplishment considering recent reductions in size of burn units.

District Staff Assignments

District 7 personnel spent 1434 days on 128 assignments out of district in the following states: CA, FL, GA, ID, MN, MT, OR, TX, and WA.

SELA Equipment Operator Glenn Catoe worked a six month detail with the Redmond Hotshots. They assisted with 12 prescribed burns and 12 wildfires in which Glenn was able to work on his FIRB Taskbook and leadership skills.

Eddie Harsh (MS-NXR ENGB) and Ross Ketron (MS-MSR FFT2) experienced a 26-day odyssey in a Type 6 engine, which took them to the Lafayette Fire on the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana to the Clark Fork Complex on the Payette National Forest in Idaho.

Jon King completed a 180 day detail in the acting Regional Helicopter Coordinator position for the Region 4 helicopter.

Josh Havird of MS-MSR detailed for two weeks in March at St. Vincent NWR as assistant refuge manager.

Training

Active fire seasons both at home and out west enabled District 7 responders to complete 16 taskbooks. Engineering Equipment Operators James Bates and Bert Rager of MS-MSR served as instructors for a new Southern Area Academy for Fireline Heavy Equipment Operators at Pearl, Mississippi. MS-MSR hosted FWS Heavy Equipment Training and three ATV classes.



USFWS firefighter Josh Havird igniting Compartment G-14 during a prescribed fire at Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR in January 2015, credit: USFWS.

SDH Noxubee NWR continued their innovative partnerships with Mississippi State University (MSU) and the Student Conservation Association (SCA). Five MSU students and two SCA interns completed Basic Firefighter Training, and participated in nine prescribed burns. Three students from recent years have hired on with Federal agencies and are maintaining their fire qualifications.

Approximately 70 employees around the District completed over 1000 hours of refresher training including RT-130, RT-212, CPR, First Aid, ATV, Defensive Driving, and a plethora of aviation refreshers including RT-271, PLDO, A-100, A-312, and M-3.

MS-MSR hosted a pipeline safety meeting that included representatives from BP Petroleum. This was an interagency meeting that had representatives from MS-MSR and the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC). MS-MSR and the Jackson County VFDs cooperatively sponsored a Basic Firefighter Training class, with Jackson County firefighter Randall Platt as Lead Instructor and FMO Emeritus Tony Wilder as Unit Instructor.

Of Note

Paul Reynolds has been promoted to Operations Section Chief (OSC1) with the Southern Area Type 1 Incident Management Red Team.

Jon King is serving on an Aviation Agile Committee which is tasked with integrating the non-fleet aviation invoicing processes into FBMS.

MS-MSR provided operational and logistical support to neighboring DeSoto National Forest, during the response to an aviation mishap.

MS-MSR personnel completed site preparation for the introduction of the endangered dusky gopher frog on the Ocean Springs Unit. This project took 1½ years and involved over 1000 personnel hours to complete. Fire management personnel were involved in various aspects such as site preparation, mechanical work and administrating contracts. The recovery program has met all targets to this point, with successful hatching of eggs and introduction of metamorphs at the pond.

Honors, Awards, Committees

District 7 employees were part of the interagency response to an oil spill at Delta NWR; James Harris, Barret Fortier, Neal Lalonde, Keith Westlake, Chris LeRouge, Jamie Farmer, and Sami Gray will receive Regional Director's Honor Awards for their roles in the response.

At the Region 4 FMO meeting in late 2014, Chris LeRouge and Paul Reynolds were presented with the 2014 Regional All-Hazard award and the 2014 Rx Fire awards, respectively.

Staffing Changes

Felsenthal: Sheena Girner was hired as a temporary seasonal firefighter in February 2015. She left Felsenthal in June when she accepted a permanent, full time biologist position with the Bureau of Land Management in Bishop, California.

Mississippi Sandhill Crane: Josh Havird accepted a position as Engineering Equipment Operator in the fire management program at Lower Suwanee NWR.

District 7

continued

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Brad Bailey	SAF 2004, IS-800	RT-130, S-133	COMT	TFLD, FAL2
James Bates	MOCC Refresher	NSA-03, SA Heavy Equipment Operator Academy	SECM	
Brett Bowser	S-131, S-133, LCES			
Danny Breaux			ENGB	
Ethan Burke	Basic Firefighter Training			
Glenn Catoe		FWS Heavy Equipment Training	FIRB	ICT5
Daniel Davis	Water Ditching & Survival		ENGB	
Angela Dedrickson	A-200			HECM
Lucas Doucet	S-290, S-260, ICS200, & ICS300		FFT1, ICT5, FAL2, & STOP	FAL3
Chad Fondren	RX 301		ICT4	
Tyler Geymann	S-130, S-190, ICS-100, IS-700			
Sheena Girner	S-131, S-133, LCES, FWS GIS, SA Heavy Equipment Operator Academy			
Sami Gray	RT-9016		RXB1	
Stewart Harrell	S-290			STOP
Eddie Harsh	RX 301			
Josh Havird	SAF-2004, SAF-2005, SAF-2007, N9024, RX-301, S-200, S-390			TPOP
Matt Johnson				DIVS
Ross Ketron	SAF-2000, SAF-2010, NSA-03			
Mike Khayat				RADO
Jon King	RX-310, RX-341, S-330, N9024	RT-271, RT9016	HEB2	RXB2
Grant Lovato	A-219		ICT5	ENGB
Bart Marble			INVF	
James McClelland			INVF	
Quincey McGee			STOP	
Jay McIlwain	IS-200, IS-800		ENGB, FAL2	STOP
Danny Moss			SECM	
Melissa Perez	Basic Firefighter Training		PIOF	
Brittany Petersen			PIOF	
Randall Platt				STOP

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Bert Rager III	RX-301	S-212, RT-212, SA Heavy Equipment Operator Academy		
Nathan Renick			EQPM	
Paul Reynolds	S-520	S-212, RT-212	ICT3	OSC1
Scott Saucier	SAF-2004, N9024		CRWB	
Mike Seal			EQPM	
Jaime Smith	Basic Firefighter Training, NSA-03			
Andrew Steffen	Basic Firefighter Training			
Cody Townsend	Basic Firefighter Training			
Jeff 'Bunk' Twiss				IADP
Jon Westerby	S-290, S-270, S-271, IS200, L-280, S-211, & S-260		FAL3	FFT1
Tony Wilder		Basic Firefighter Training		
Meg Zuercher	Basic Firefighter Training			

SDH Noxubee: Three new employees were added to the refuge staff this past year: Brandon Bleiler and Brad Bradford are Engineering Equipment Operators and Jacob Gross is Refuge Operations Specialist. All three will be an asset not only to the Refuge but also to the prescribed fire program.

SELA: Chris LeRouge was promoted to the position of Assistant Fire Management Officer.

SWLA: Jamie Farmer (FMO) left SWLA at the end of FY15 for Port Louisa NWR in Iowa, where he is serving as the Zone FMO for FWS lands in Iowa and Missouri. In February, Shaun Martinet left the fire crew for a Biological Technician job at Lacassine NWR. Jon Westerby was welcomed to the SWLA fire crew in July as a Career-Seasonal Forestry Technician.

USFWS firefighters use a tractor plow to help suppress a wildfire at Bon Secour NWR in Alabama in May of 2015, credit: USFWS.



Regional Office

Year Overview Wildfire

The Southeast Region saw a decrease in wildland fire numbers during Fiscal Year 2015. FWS Firefighters responded to 151 wildfires which burned 25,157 acres on FWS lands this year; compared to 238 fires burning 27,535 acres in FY14. All fires were managed in a safe manner with no lost time accidents reported. The majority of the region's wildfire activity was located in Florida this year. While many of these fires were actively suppressed, there were cases where local management plans allowed the fires to be managed for resource benefit. Five wildfires were managed for resource benefit for a total of 4,076 acres. In addition to the regional workload, Southeast Region personnel accepted numerous assignments to assist with the busy fire season in the Pacific Northwest, Northern Rockies and California Geographic Areas.

Long term severity funding (30 days) was requested this year by our refuges in Puerto Rico. They also requested a 30-day extension.

Fuels Management

Even with continued reductions in hazardous fuels funding, the total acres managed through prescribed fire treatments were higher than last year. This fiscal year's target for acreage treated, as determined through the HFPAS process, was a success and the region accomplished 105% (52,178 acres) of the FY 2015 target. Additional funds through interior and exterior partnerships were used to help treat an additional 78,038 acres. All of the treatments were accomplished in a safe and efficient manner, reducing hazardous fuel loading and maintaining the health of our fire dependent landscapes.

The training modules at the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC) successfully completed 11 prescribed fires that treated 12,777 acres on four refuges in the Southeast Region. Attendance from the FWS

included; two field coordinators (module leaders), six trainees working on Burn Boss or Firing Boss qualifications, and seven Line Officers that attended the Prescribed Fire Workshop for Agency Administrators. PFTC continued to supply the interagency community; with 24 burn bosses, 29 firing bosses, and seven fire effects monitors returning to their home unit with recommendations for certification for their positions. These skills were honed on 193 burns totaling 65,682 acres, of which 15,766 acres were in the Wildland/Urban Interface zone. These burns were conducted in six states on 47 different cooperators' lands including state, private, and non-government organization land. This year, the modules at PFTC surpassed one million acres treated with prescribed fire since the Center was established in 1998. The burn that pushed us past the benchmark was conducted at A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR.

Training and Qualifications

This year approximately 54 position task books were completed by service fire personnel in the field and at the regional office. Of those, three were for Command and General Staff positions; Jennifer Hinckley PSC2, Bonnie Strawser PIO1, and Paul Reynolds OSC1. That is a significant contribution to the Southern Area Incident Management Team Program. Also worth mentioning is the completion of six Burn Boss task books; Grant Gifford, Anthony Dimaggio, Nathan Herron, Adam McCullough, Melvin Walston, and Roberto Trincado (RXB1). Kudos to all of those who completed a Burn Boss task book, that is a significant contribution to our prescribed burning program.

The interagency priority trainee dispatching process "Priority Trainee List," developed by the Southern Area Training Working Team and implemented at the Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC), was continued this year — the effort was expanded to a national effort in 2013. Working in cooperation, geographic area coordination centers

have begun sharing priority trainee lists and stepping up efforts to place trainees on fire assignments. The purpose of this process is to better serve the agencies as a more robust trainee prioritization and rotation system. Although the process is still being honed, the number of trainees placed on assignment, coupled with the volume of completed task books, suggests the process is shaping up to be an efficient dispatching tool.

The Southeast Region's involvement in the annual Tennessee/Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy was notable. Mike Housh has served on the steering committee as the FWS representative since its inception 13 years ago. This year, FWS sponsored and delivered S-230, Crew Boss (Single Resource) and RX-410 Smoke Management. Twenty-four FWS firefighters attended the academy as students this year.

The fire program hosted a SCA Veterans Fire Corp crew this year and they received a significant amount of training. After getting their initial firefighter training (S-130, S-190, L-180) and S-212 Fire Chainsaws by the Florida Forest Service at Withlacoochee they received:

- S-131 Advanced Firefighter at St Marks NWR, coordinated by Brian Pippin,
- S-133 Look Up, Look Down, Look Around at Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR, coordinated by Brad Bailey, and
- NSA03 ATV Operations at Mississippi Sandhill Crane, coordinated by James Bates.

Bert Rager functioned as final evaluator of all the Faller task books after having the crew lead, Wesley Adams, evaluate them as well. That proved to be a good approach and kudos go out to Bert.

Additionally, recognition for a good job goes out to Bunk Twiss on the IQCS side of things; they have some solid training and experience records now.

All Hazard

The Region was fortunate to make it through another hurricane season without any major storms making landfall. Multiple tropical systems threatened or impacted Service interests, but damage type did not require an emergency response.

Planning

The Southeast Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has 71 field units requiring Fire Management Plans (FMP). These are maintained in a database at the regional office. Field units are responsible for performing annual FMP reviews and providing updates as necessary.

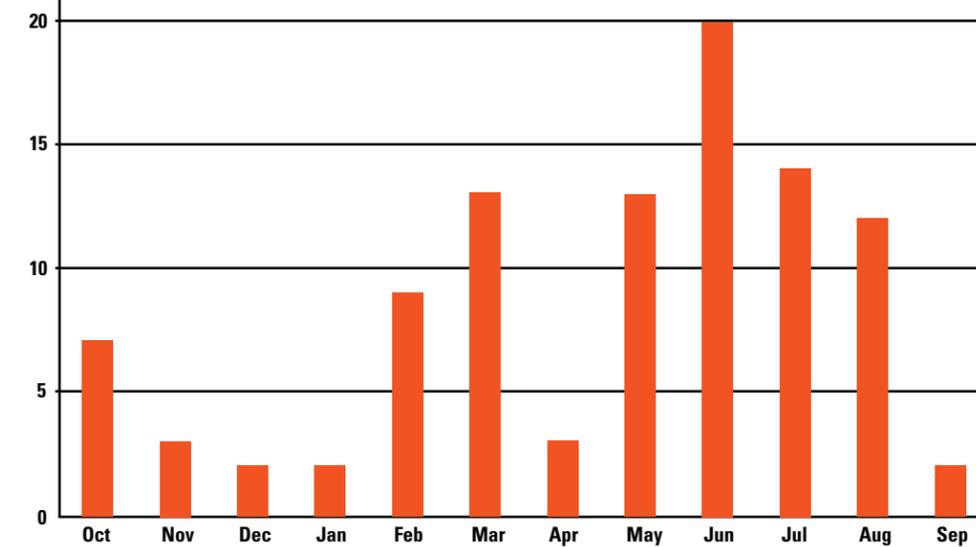
A database for statewide master fire agreements with the 10 southeastern states and Puerto Rico is maintained annually. The Agreement with Tennessee was renewed this year.

Last year the R4 Fire Management Program implemented a system of certifying Annual Preparedness Reviews at stations receiving preparedness funding. So far, 16 of the 20 stations receiving preparedness funds have participated, which translates to a little greater than 75% compliance rate.

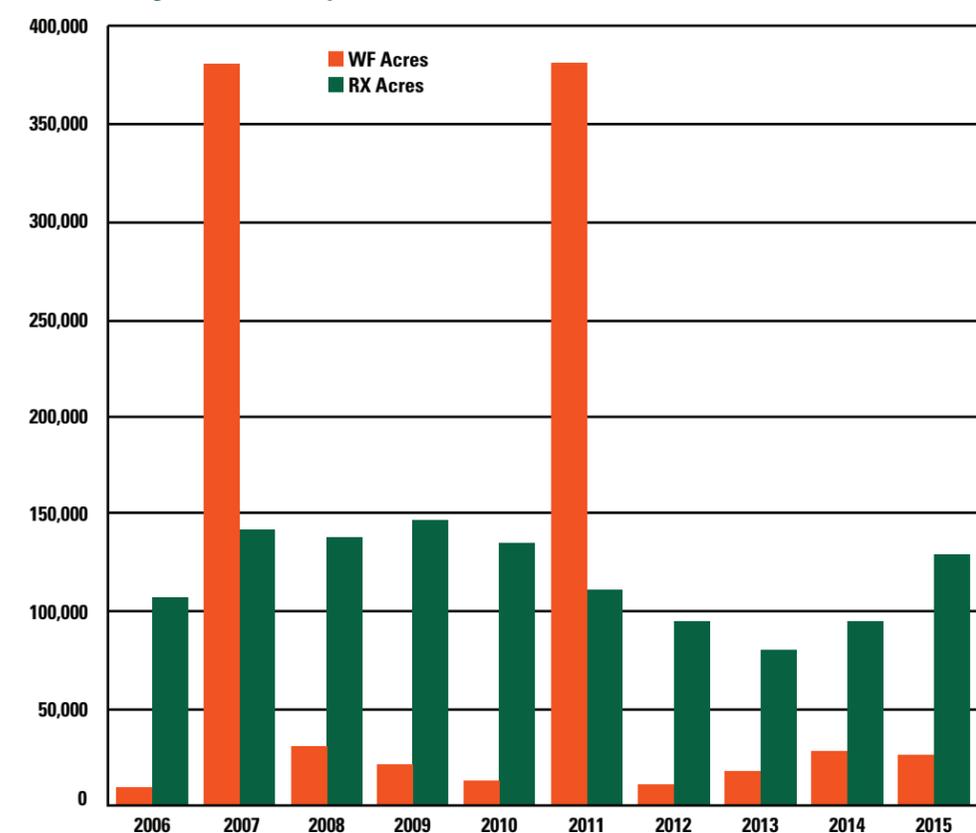
Two of the primary DOI WUI mitigation programs— the Rural Fire Assistance Program (RFA) and the Ready Reserve Program— received no funding for FY2015. Although no funding was allocated, administrative work was still completed within both programs. Namely, ensuring funds obligated in the past were being appropriately utilized and facilitating the proper closing of grant agreements. This year, after a program duration of nearly a decade and a half, ALL of the RFA grants were closed out. It was a good program that fostered a lot of valuable partnerships.

Field units continue to work with cooperators, predominantly the state fire protection/forestry agencies, in development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. These plans continue

Region 4 Wildfire Starts FY 2015



Region 4 Wildfire and Treatment Acres FY 2005-2014



Regional Office

continued

to be developed on a wide array of spatial scales — ranging from single small communities up to county-wide.

Fire Ecology

In FY 2015, there were no Emergency Stabilization plans submitted. Two Burned Area Rehabilitation Plans (BAR plans) were approved for funding. One BAR plan includes treatments to reforest the native tropical trees burned by the Disaster Fire at Laguna Cartagena NWR (July 2015). The second BAR plan includes treatments to detect and eradicate invasive species that occur within the Last Dance Fire area (burned July 2015) on ARM Loxahatchee NWR. Invasive species treated will include *Melaleuca* and *Lygodium*.

Fire atlas projects completed in FY 2015 include Sabine, Mississippi Sandhill Crane, and Grand Bay NWRs. GIS layers have been provided to the refuges for archiving and application. Previously developed fire atlases for southeast region refuges include Big Branch Marsh and St Marks NWRs. Future atlases (FY16) will include Merritt Island NWR.

In FY 2015 there were continued partnerships between the Service's Southeast Region I&M and Fire Management Branches to develop regional standards for protocols, design, implementation and data analysis of fire monitoring data.

Budget

The Region saw a slight increase in funding in FY15 and expects a flat budget for FY16. Salaries still comprise greater



USFWS firefighters conducting a prescribed fire to improve Scrub Jay habitat at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, credit USFWS/Jennifer Hinckley.

than 75% of the budget and Management Considerations may be tighter in FY16. Previous year fiscal planning allowed the Region to replace fire equipment that was the highest priority in need of replacement. The Region as a whole is still being encouraged to implement cost saving measures and prepare for potential future budget reductions.

Of Note

Mike Dueitt served as the Incident Commander on the Southern Area Red Team (IMT1).

Sue Wilder continues to serve as FWS representative on the long term monitoring study team of the in-situ burn conducted following an oil spill at Delta NWR.

Josh O'Connor assisted R1(Northwest) during their busy wildland fire season.

Pat Boucher is a co-administrator to the new SACC website. Also, Pat Boucher is on the Dispatcher's Working Team and is working with the Southern and Eastern Area for the combined Dispatcher's Workshop that will take place the week of Feb 23rd, 2016 at NCTC.

Pat Boucher was SACC's Lead Intelligence backup and Famweb Coordinator until the vacant position was filled.

Kevin Scasny continues to work with the contractor and administrators to implement transition to the NIFC (National Interagency Fire Center) web server.

Fire Reports for FY 2015

Refuge	Number of Treatments	Treatment Acres	Number of Wildfires	Wildfires Acres
Alligator River NWR	5	881.0	3	87.9
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	5	11,637.3	6	15,822.7
Bayou Savage NWR			3	208.5
Big Branch Marsh NWR	6	628.7	1	.01
Blackbeard Island NWR			2	409.0
Bogue Chitto NWR	1	58.0		
Bon Secour NWR	1	253.8		18.0
Cabo Rojo NWR	2	78.4	10	8.3
Cache River NWR			1	81.0
Cameron Prairie NWR	5	290.5		
Carolina Sandhills NWR	23	5,140.0		
Cat Island NWR			1	4.2
Cedar Island NWR	1	5,000.0		
D'Arbonne NWR	3	180.7		
Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin NWR	7	2,015.0	2	0.2
Eufaula NWR			1	0.1
Felsenthal NWR	10	2,163.5	3	0.3
Florida Panther NWR	15	5,817.0		
Grand Bay NWR			2	244.0
Hobe Sound NWR	1	8.0	1	0.1
Key Cave NWR	4	134.9		
Lacassine NWR	4	333.0		
Laguna Cartagena NWR	1	67.9	2	344.6
Lake Wales Ridge NWR	1	303.0	1	.01
Lake Woodruff NWR	6	4,755.5		
Lower Suwannee NWR	15	4,492.0	1	1.0
Mackay Island NWR	1	1,624.0	1	0.1
Mattamuskeet NWR	1	409.0		
Merritt Island NWR	8	10,501.0	19	3,455.3
Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR	32	6,229.4	7	78.2
National Key Deer NWR			1	0.1

Employee	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Fire Assignment/State
Josh O'Connor	UGA Marchmester	SOPL	TFLD/OR
Jon Wallace	S-491 EA, S-491 SA, Advanced NFDRS — NAFRI	OSC1	FBAN/MT, ICT3/FL, RXB1/MS
Vince Carver		DIVS	DIVSt/CA
Pat Boucher	ROSS Lead Instructor in Tallahassee, FL and Pearl MS at Academy		GACC Coordinator/CO-RMC/ TXF Acting Center Mgr
Mike Dueitt	PFTC		ICT1/WA, ICT1/MS, ICT1/FL

Regional Office

continued

Honors, Awards, Committees

Josh O'Connor served as the Chair of the USFWS National Fuels Working Team.

Rick Struhar serves on the Southern Area Training Working Team and the National Fire Operations Safety Team (NFOST). Along with safety, policy, and fire operations issues, this team addresses national level training and qualifications issues.

Pat Boucher serves on the Southern Area Dispatcher's Working Group. She is also on the National Committee for the Excellence in Dispatching Award Committee.

Jon Wallace is the Chair of the NWCG Fire Danger Committee

Staffing Changes

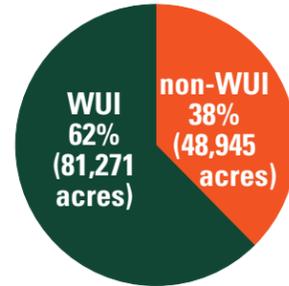
Regional Fire Management Coordinator Pete Kubiak retired in early January.

Vince Carver was named the Regional Fire Management Coordinator in January.

Jon Wallace was named the Deputy Regional Fire Management Coordinator in May and moved to Atlanta in July.

Kim Eldridge joined the Fire Management Division as a Geographer in January; Kim most recently worked for the Planning Division and has been working in the Regional Office since 1999.

Region 4 Treatment Acres

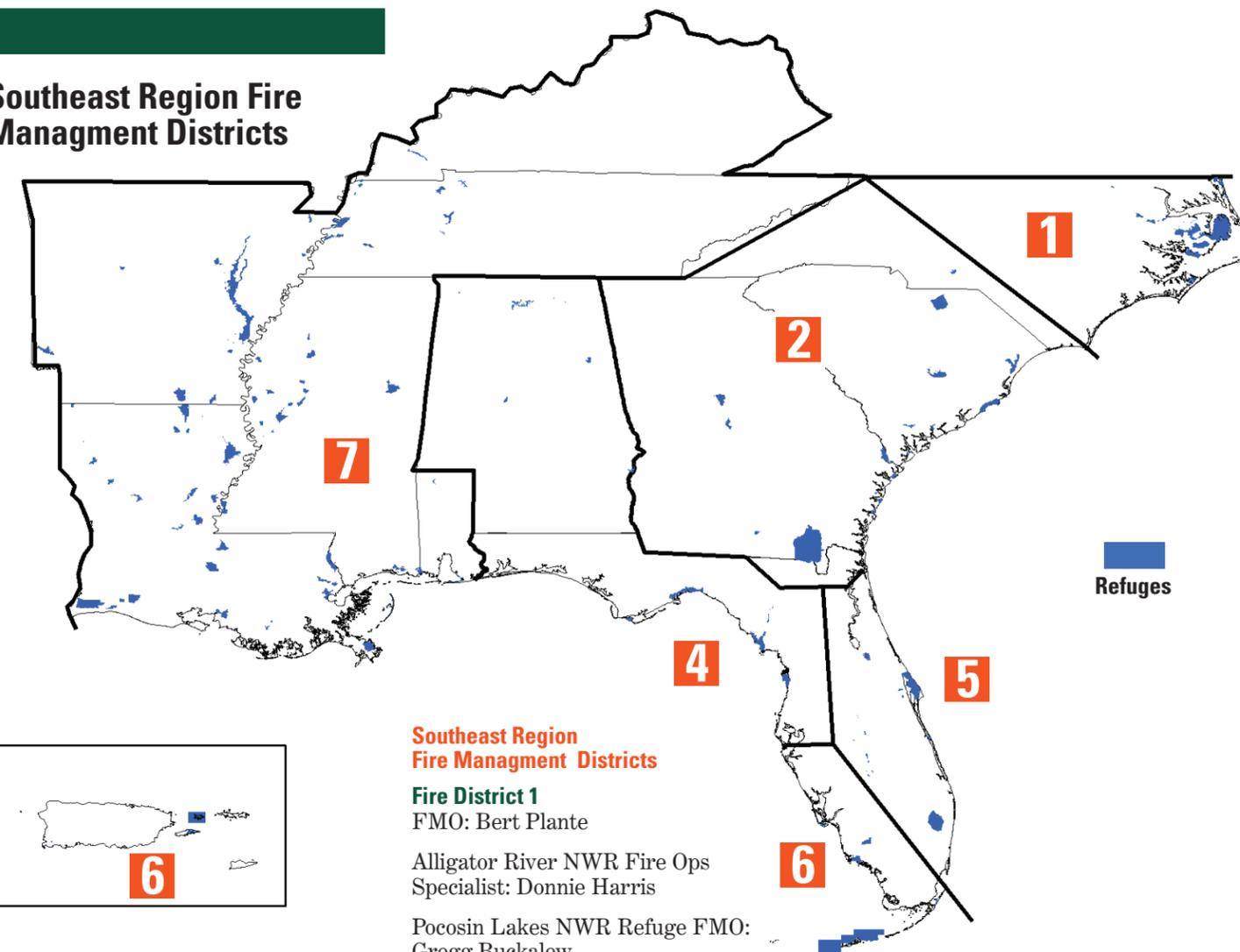


The black edge of the Buckwheat Fire on Blackbeard Island, the fire was started by lightning in July of 2015 in the Blackbeard Wilderness area, the fire was managed as a fire with resource benefit for two weeks until it burned into the edge of last year's wildfire, credit USFWS/Rob Wood.

Fire Reports for FY 2015

Refuge	Number of Treatments	Treatment Acres	Number of Wildfires	Wildfires Acres
Okefenokee NWR	7	1,275.0	9	306.5
Overflow NWR			1	0.5
Pee Dee NWR	1	50.0		
Piedmont NWR	19	9,122.0	3	4.4
Pinckney Island NWR	2	286.4		
Pocosin Lakes NWR	3	2,282.0	1	0.1
Sabine NWR	9	22,650.0	2	874.5
Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR	15	4,638.0		
Santee NWR	2	100.0	1	0.5
Savannah NWR	5	581.2		
St. Johns NWR	2	988.0	3	0.3
St. Marks NWR	62	23,062.6	4	1,013.3
St. Vincent NWR	3	1,791.0	2	2,190.0
Tensas River NWR	1	67.1		
Upper Ouachita NWR	2	321.0		
Vieques NWR			1	1.0
Waccamaw NWR			1	0.1
Wassaw NWR			1	0.2
Wheeler NWR			2	0.8
Grand Total				25,155.9

Southeast Region Fire Management Districts



Southeast Region Fire Management Districts

Fire District 1

FMO: Bert Plante

Alligator River NWR Fire Ops Specialist: Donnie Harris

Pocosin Lakes NWR Refuge FMO: Gregg Buckalew

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 FMO: Reese Kerbow

Okefenokee NWR AFMO: Reggie Forcine

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 (MIR): Michael Good

Southeast Regional Fire Office (Atlanta)

Regional Fire Management Coordinator: Vince Carver

Deputy Regional Fire Management Coordinator: Jon Wallace

Regional Prescribed Fire Coordinator: Josh O'Connor

Regional Fire Manager Specialist: Rick Struhar

Regional Fire Geographer: Kim Eldrige

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

Merritt Island NWR AFMO: Jay Mickey

ARM Loxahatchee NWR FMO (LXR): Tom Ledbetter

Fire District 6

FMO: Cass Palmer

Florida Panther NWR AFMO: Justin Turnbo

PFS (FPR): Greg Suszek

Caribbean Islands NWR: James Padilla

Fire District 7

FMO: Sami Gray

District PFS: Scott Saucier

Southwest Louisiana Complex FMO: Vacant

Southeast Louisiana Complex AFMO: Chris LeRouge

Noxubee NWR FMO: Paul Reynolds

Felsenthal NWR FMO: Matthew Johnson

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Fire Management
1875 Century Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30345
<http://www.fws.gov/southeastfire>
<http://twitter.com/USFWSFireSE>
February 2016**



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.