
Yellowstone

National Park Service
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park
Wyoming 82190

Fire Recovery Program

The fires of 1988 were widely reported and aroused unprecedented public interest in Yellowstone National Park. In response, the Park Recovery/Rehabilitation Fund was established to coordinate and encourage public participation in the recovery of Yellowstone. Donations, monetary and otherwise, and other offers of support are welcomed.

The Children's Fire Trail

Yellowstone has long occupied a special place in the hearts of America's children. From its glittering geysers and endlessly varied thermal wonders to its vast herds of wildlife, Yellowstone is a storybook land of wonder and imagination.

It is not surprising that when media coverage of Yellowstone's 1988 fire season reached a peak that school children began to respond. Offers of help have poured in from around the country. Many youngsters wanted to collect pine cones and trees to reforest Yellowstone. Scout groups wanted to come out and offer their voluntary labor. Teachers had their students to collect pennies door-to-door to send to Yellowstone.

No matter how noble, many of these ideas were clearly inappropriate for Yellowstone. It became clear that the National Park Service needed to define ways for the youth of America to express their generosity and concern and to become involved in building tomorrow's Yellowstone— a national park that will be every bit as exciting and beautiful as Yellowstone before the fires.

Yellowstone officials had already developed plans for a number of interpretive nature trails emphasizing fire ecology. It was decided that one of these trails would

be a Yellowstone Children's Fire Trail where children and their families could experience first hand the power of natural fire for both destruction and regeneration.

As envisioned, the trail will be a boardwalk path of about one mile in length that will lead people through a variety of forest types and include areas that were totally burned, areas that were partially burned, and some areas that were not burned at all. Ideally, the trail will also include an area that had been burned in the past showing first hand the long-term process of forest recovery.

The start of the trail will feature a large four-color exhibit panel showing the trail configuration and giving a brief fire history of the area. Along the trail itself there will be approximately 15 smaller exhibit panels each telling a particular facet of the area's forest ecology and how it is influenced by wildfire. The story of forest recovery will be told as well as how the fires influence Yellowstone's animal populations.

Besides the interpretive exhibits, the trail will have benches for resting as well as a couple of boardwalk "pullouts" where groups of people can be gathered for programs or activities. The trail will also be accessible to the handicapped or those with limited mobility.

A companion publication, perhaps in a comic book format, will be written that tells the story of forest ecology in an entertaining way. This booklet will be available at the trailhead and at visitor centers as a keepsake of each child's trip to the new Yellowstone. The comic book will also be incorporated as part of Yellowstone's popular environmental education program, [Expedition:Yellowstone!](#)

All donations to the Yellowstone Children's Fire Trail will be appropriately acknowledged. All donors, regardless of the size of their contribution, will receive a certificate of appreciation signed by the Chief Park Naturalist designating the recipient as a "true friend" of Yellowstone. Schools, teachers, and children whose combined contributions total more than \$5 per person will receive their choice of either a Yellowstone shoulder patch or decal (one per individual).

The Children's Fire Trail offers us both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to raise the \$125,000 necessary to make the trail a reality. The opportunity is that children will learn the real effects of natural fire in a wilderness landscape— effects that are more often beneficial to the longterm health and stability of the park than they are destructive.

What You Can Do

If you wish to donate to the Children's Fire Trail, please make checks payable to The National Park Service and mail to the Superintendent, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190. Please indicate that your donation is for the Children's Fire Trail.

If you would like to find out more about the Park Recovery Program, write to Lee Davis or Linda Miller at the above address or phone (307) 344-7381, ext. 2362.
