



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

P.O. BOX 37127

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-7127



IN REPLY REFER TO:

A54(650)

Memorandum

To: Directorate and Field Directorate

From: ~~Director~~

Subject: 1987 Fire Season Review

There were numerous records set during the wildfire activity in the past year. Not the least of these was the record mobilization of almost 1,200 park service employees to western fire activity. That action alone touched most of the parks and impacted park programs coast to coast. Contributions ranged from none to hundreds of workdays per park as managers weighed their priorities against the needs of other parks and agencies with critical wildfires.

Specific reviews of wildfires are being conducted on a case-by-case basis. The season review focused on issues that necessitated special attention. Ten issues were identified and are highlighted in the attached report along with recommendations and actions needed to close out the issues. The Branch of Fire Management, in conjunction with the Regional Fire Coordinators, will focus upon these issues in the weeks ahead. The Chief, Branch of Fire Management, will be responsible for tracking the actions required to accomplish the recommendations agreed upon at this conference.

We want to thank all of the participants for their contributions. We particularly appreciate the active involvement by the park Superintendents. Their perspective and candid dialogue contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the review.

Our thanks to Douglas Erskine, Alaska, Regional Fire Coordinator for chairing the review and generating the final report in a very timely manner and to Mark Forbes, PNW, Regional Fire Coordinator for assisting.

Attachment

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM REVIEW

1987 FIRE SEASON



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE 1987 FIRE SEASON REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

During the late summer of 1987 the National Park Service, for the third consecutive year, broke all previous records in the mobilization of its resources to assist with an unprecedented wildland fire problem. From late August through October, over 1200 NPS employees were dispatched in firefighter, support and overhead positions. The number of people taken from their regular jobs and the duration of their commitment has never been approached in NPS history. Although most of the fire problem was within other agency jurisdictions, several parks were directly and significantly affected. Portions of Yosemite, Lassen Volcanic and Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Parks were closed and the public evacuated. Access to portions of other parks were closed. The Service obligated over \$12 million in the suppression effort.

A review of the 1987 fire season was held at Snowbird, Utah from December 1-3. The WASO fire staff, regional fire coordinators, representatives from fire impacted parks and five park superintendents attended. Prior to the review, WASO, regional and park managers were asked to identify fire related issues which needed to be resolved at the meeting. Criteria for inclusion of an issue and parameters within which recommended solutions had to fall included:

- Safety could be improved.
- Recommendations could be implemented during the years 1988-89.
- Subsequent actions would make a positive difference in the current way of doing business.
- Issue resolution is within NPS scope of authority to accomplish.
- Our work would be made simpler.
- Our natural resources and the public will be better served.

STATEMENTS OF FINDING

Issue I

Mobilization: What is the NPS commitment to interagency sharing of human resources during periods of mobilization?

Recommendation: An organizational needs analysis through the unit leader/incident command multi-resource level needs to be done at the park level. Also identify what portion is available for off unit dispatch. This needs analysis should have the superintendents concurrence and be forwarded to

BIFC through the regional offices. The regional coordinators should do the analysis for those parks not on the wildland fire computer system. A Service needs analysis from the multi-resource level through the multi-division level should be completed by BIFC.

Action: A. Draft needs analysis request memo to be sent to regions and parks from WASO. Forward memo to BIFC. Bobinchock on January 15, 1988.

B.. Servicewide needs analysis to be compiled by next regional coordinators' meeting. BIFC - February 20, 1988.

Recommendation 2:

The National Park Service, as a matter of practice, should encourage park units to maintain existing fire qualifications of personnel over and above the operational needs of the individual park.

Action: Draft statement to be included in managers fire management training course and forward to BIFC. (See recommendation 2 of Issue 4). Bobinchock - February 1, 1988.

Issue II

Park Closure/Evacuation: Ensure there is a standard and logical approach to park closures and evacuations.

Recommendation 1:

Define mechanism in park fire management plans for making decisions. This needs to include:

- Strong public information component:
 - Internal - Interdivisional, WASO, Region
 - External - Press, Concessions, Visitors, Neighbors
- Define decision process, formalize alternatives on Escaped Fire Situation Analysis (EFSA):
 - Individuals - Superintendent or Chief Ranger, Resources Management, FMO, Park Management Committee - Specify the officials to be included.
- Include evacuation contingencies.

Action: Draft policy statement for inclusion in NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Chetwin - March 1, 1988.

Recommendation 2:

Insure delegation of authority is complete, specific and mutually understood by Incident Commander and Park Superintendent.

Action:

Draft policy for inclusion in NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Draft statement and forward to NWCG training team. Chetwin - February 20, 1988.

Recommendation 3:

Implement Service requirement for evaluation of Incident Commander and team by Superintendent prior to release from job.

Action:

Draft Policy statement on ICS team management to be included in managers fire management training course and forward to BIFC. Chetwin - March 1, 1988.

Issue III

Hazard Reduction: A presuppression and suppression tactic which can reduce resource damage.

Philosophy/Overall Objectives

Recommendation 1:

Strengthen NPS-18 direction to prescribe burn for reducing hazards to:

- Protect structures/neighboring lands
- Protect ecosystems (cautionary note on duplicating natural process)
- Quantify economic return

Action:

Draft policy statement for inclusion in NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Hulick - March 1, 1988.

Recommendation 2:

Fireproofing around structures on a regular basis with a cost/benefit return analysis.

Action:

Develop cost/benefit analysis guideline for hazard reduction by prescribed burning for inclusion in NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Hulick - March 1, 1988.

Recommendation 3:

Use land acquisition program to obtain structures that require expensive suppression/hazard reduction programs.

Action: Draft statement to include cost/benefit formula for inclusion in managers fire management training. Hulick - March 1, 1988.

Recommendation 4:
Encourage hazard reduction around historical resources and concessions.

Action: Develop policy statement for inclusion in NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Hulick - March 1, 1988.

Science and Technology

Recommendation 5:
Tune up burn-boss course to use "Fire Effects Package" computer system.

Action: Investigate possibility for inclusion in Burn Boss School. Norum - June 1, 1988.

Recommendation 6:
Expand use of Geographic Information System (GIS) as a fire management tool.

Action: Draft cost/benefit statement for inclusion in managers fire management training concerning use of GIS in fire management and forward to BIFC. Hulick - April 30, 1988.

Recommendation 7:
(includes action)
Update list of science/technology transfer education programs (videos etc.) currently available. Hulick - March 30, 1988.

Prioritization/Scheduling

Recommendation 8:
Encourage "Operational Evaluations" to recognize value of prescribed burning for hazard reduction.

Action: Develop questions and statements for inclusion in operations evaluation package and forward to Chief of Ranger Activities, WASO. Hulick - March 1, 1988.

Recommendation 9:
Encourage use of "Fire Reviews" to point out benefits of hazard reduction.

Action: Draft policy statement for inclusion in NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Hulick - March 1,

1988.

Training/Staffing

Recommendation 10:

Reiterate recommendation from training working group on the necessity for NARTC training course for NPS managers.

Action: Develop fire management for managers training course. BIFC - 1988.

Recommendation 11:

Accelerate burn boss training on a regular regional basis.

Action: None - dependent on funds.

Recommendation 12:

Utilize "organizational needs analysis" to identify prescribed burning needs on a regional basis and to get burn teams together to specialize in fuel models.

Action: Regional coordinators to do as needed.

Recommendation 13:

Solicit individual parks as to their potential needs and the resources they could contribute to regional teams.

Action: Regional coordinators to do as needed.

Interagency/Cooperation

Recommendation 14:

Encourage parks to develop local agreements to get experience in other fuel types.

Action: Regional coordinators or park FMO's to do as needed.

Issue IV

Prescribed Natural Fire vs. Confine, Contain, Control: Confusion exists in terms and when each strategy is used.

Recommendation 1:

Prepare a paper that clarifies the three terms; confine, contain, control, and give examples of the appropriate uses.

Action: Draft definitions and examples and forward to BIFC. Clark - April 1, 1988.

Recommendation 2: Develop a training course for Superintendents and other non-fire people (information officers, interpreters etc.) as one of the following options:

- 40 hour course - Reduce Resource Management Trainee Course to 40 hour program
- 8 hour package that can be given at Superintendents Conference
- 1 hour program at General Superintendents Conference

Develop a short executive summary of NPS-18 to go along with the course.

Action: Draft outline for these three presentations and forward to BIFC. Clark - March 1, 1988.

Issue V

Situation reporting: How are reports generated, what is the content and how often are they needed?

Recommendation 1: Include a session in the managers fire management training describing the need for situation reports.

Action: Draft statement for inclusion in fire management for managers training course. Zuckert - February 1, 1988.

Recommendation 2: Include in NPS-18 the clear requirements for situation reports, their content and frequency.

Action: Draft statement for inclusion in NPS-18 update. Zuckert - February 1, 1988.

Issue VI

Safety: Several safety issues were identified as indicated in following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Provide S-231 (Tactics) to all crew supervisors as soon as the course is available.

Action: As above, Regional Coordinators - open.

Recommendation 2:

Have the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) training team strengthen the lesson module for the Plans and Operations sections in the proper and critical use of fire behavior analysts to increase safety.

Action: Draft proposal and forward to NWCG training working team member. Joep, Clark - February 1, 1988.

Recommendation 3:

Distribute and reaffirm US Forest Service findings in "Fire, Health and Safety Evaluation - Northern California Complexes" memo.

Action: Distribute findings with cover memo to all regions and parks. BIFC - when available.

Recommendation 4:

Reaffirm hazards of wearing synthetic undergarments when Nomex is otherwise required.

Action: Draft statement for inclusion in fire line notebook and forward to BIFC. Joep, Clark - February 1, 1988.

Recommendation 5:

Develop a procedure for direct communication to WASO safety office for quick dissemination to the field whenever serious safety issues are discovered.

Action: Draft procedure, format and forward to BIFC. Joep, Clark - March 1, 1988.

Recommendation 6:

Because crew welfare and safety can be compromised in large fire situations it is recommended that NPS ensure that adequate and competent crew liaison officers (CLOs) and agency representatives are assigned to crews being dispatched out of their respective regions.

Action: Work through geographical boards and regional dispatch centers to make sure an adequate number of high quality CLOs and agency representatives are identified prior to the fire season and dispatched with our crews. Regional coordinators - March 1, 1988.

Recommendation 7:

Major health problems were encountered this year with inhalation of smoke and carbon monoxide while on the line and in fire camp. It was recommended that we investigate the availability of breathing filters or breathing apparatus suitable for fire line use.

Action: Investigate availability of suitable equipment with help from WASO safety. Joep, Clark - March 30, 1988

Recommendation 8:

It was recommended that the new fire line handbook be required reading prior to firefighter training.

Action: This is not an interagency requirement but NPS can require it inhouse. Recommend policy change for NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Joep, Clark - February 20, 1988. Regional coordinators make handbook available when it is available.

Recommendation 9:

The fact that there is no designated tactical fire aviation specialist identified in the Service was seen as a safety problem.

Action: A. Draft recommendation to BIFC that a tactical fire aviation contact be established in that office. Joep, Clark - February 1, 1988.
B. Draft aviation safety statement for inclusion in managers fire management training course and forward to BIFC. Joep, Clark - March 30, 1988.

Issue VII

Fiscal year transition of seasonal employees' FTE and base pay when fire emergency transcends the fiscal year and programmed season.

Recommendation 1:

Guidelines are needed to extend seasonal personnel beyond their original COB date and/or converting their base eight hours of pay from programmed account to PWE 343 or 344 when their employment is extended due to fire emergency.

Action: Draft policy statement for inclusion in Personnel Management Bulletin and NPS-18 update and forward to BIFC. Gause - February 1, 1988.

Recommendation 2:

Guidelines are needed to explain how to manage accounts for prescribed natural fires that convert to wildfires and for fires that transcend fiscal years.

Action: Draft instructions for inclusion in NPS-18 update. Zuckert - February 1, 1988.

Issue VIII

Overhead Development: The Service is losing fire overhead either through retirement or assignment of personnel into positions that keep them from being available for fire assignment.

Recommendation 1:

A Servicewide needs analysis from the multi-resource level through the multi-division level needs to be done to identify the positions and numbers of overhead we need to maintain.

Action: This will be done with recommendation 1 of Issue 1. BIFC - February 20, 1988.

Recommendation 2:

Compare positions we need to maintain with those we can expect to have ten years from now and identify a development plan to meet our long range needs. BIFC - June 1, 1988.

Recommendation 3:

Include this subject in managers fire management training.

Action: Draft above statement and forward to BIFC. Cameron - February 1, 1988.

Issue IX

Prescribed Fire Escape: Two parks experienced significant fire escapes onto adjacent landowners.

Recommendation 1:

Request solicitor's opinion on extent of manager's liability and how to best reduce liability for escaped prescribed fires.

Action: A. Draft opinion request memo and forward to BIFC. Broyles - January 15, 1988.
B. Include solicitor's opinion in next revision

of NPS-18 and in manager's fire management training. BIFC - upon receipt of opinion.

Issue X

All risk Q and C development: Should NPS expand its fire qualification and certification system to include all risk?

Recommendation 1:

We should try one subject matter field to determine feasibility and cost of project. Law enforcement was selected because the Service could expect the greatest pay back in terms of L.E. commission management.

Action: A. Convene law enforcement subject matter expert group to evaluate feasibility of project and to develop job performance requirements for law enforcement. Forbes - March 1, 1988.

Action: B. Develop cost estimate for software modification and time requirement to establish law enforcement qualifications on the fire management computer system. Vice Erickson - March 30, 1988.

General Recommendation from the Chair:

A follow-up report detailing the accomplishments made as a result of these recommendations and actions should be developed and sent to all attendees and any other interested parties.

Action suggested:

Draft and disseminate the above report. Dabney - September 1, 1988.

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Name	Office
Doug Erskine, Chairman	AR
Walt Dabney	Ranger Activities
Dave Butts	FIRE
Rod Norum	FIRE
Scott Erickson	FIRE
Ted Rex	FIRE
Judi Zuckert	FIRE
Laurie Keys	FIRE
Len Bobinchock	NAR
Kathy Jope	MAR
Ken Hulick	SER
Jim Olson	RMR
Ben Holmes	MWR
Tom Monroe	NCR
Cliff Chetwin	SWR
Mark Forbes	PNR
Chris Cameron	WR
Jim Northup	GRTE
Jim Martin	HAVO
Tom Pimentell	YOSE
Paul Broyles	BICY
Mike Warren	SEKI
Don Forester	GRCA
Dean Clark	LAVO
Mike Glass	BADL
Jack Davis	SEKI
Mike Finley	EVER
W. Glen Gray	SARA
Jack Morehead	YOSE
Jack Stark	GRTE
Mike Brinkmeyer	JOTR
Cliff White	Environmental-Canada-Parks
Bill Oswald	GOGA