



Burning Issues



Fall 2016

2016 – AN AVERAGE FIRE SEASON

After the record-setting wildfire season last year, the 2016 was about average, with 51,676 fires burning more than five million acres.

Large fire activity started in early February in Oklahoma, where more than 713,000 acres burned in just a few months. Kansas also had an active spring, burning more than 350,000 acres.

In May, 200 wildland firefighters were mobilized to assist with the Fort McMurray fire in Canada. Two airtankers and a lead plane also helped with large fires in the province of Ontario. Firefighting agreements with the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre allow both countries to assist each other when requested.

In the West, cooler spring and early summer temperatures, high elevation snowpack and late spring precipitation kept fuels moist into the summer months. These weather conditions helped keep the National Preparedness Level (PL) at PL1 until June 6, when it increased to PL2.

The National Multi-agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) increased preparedness to PL3 on July 26 as six geographic areas reported large fire activity. On August 2, NMAC activated two Department of Defense C-130s equipped with Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS) to help with fire suppression efforts in the Great Basin, California, Northwest and Northern Rockies Areas.

State	Fires	Acres
Oklahoma	1,598	713,499
California	7,189	553,075
Alaska	559	495,546
Idaho	629	361,718
Kansas	78	350,157

These five states burned the most acres in 2016. Source: NICC

The preparedness level increased to PL4 on August 19, where it remained for 13 days. Changing weather conditions caused the fire season to quickly wind down and by September 2, NMAC lowered the preparedness level to PL3. It decreased to PL2 four days later.

One alarming trend this fire season was the increase in the number of drones flying near large fires. At least 30 unauthorized public drone incursions occurred in 11 states this summer. Air operations were shutdown at least 19 times. Some fires, like the Saddle Fire in Utah and the Pioneer Fire in Idaho, had multiple drone incursions. An interagency “If You Fly, We Can’t” outreach campaign was launched to remind people to stay away from wildfires.

As we reflect on the 2016 fire season, statistics show that average or below average fire seasons since 2000 are the outliers rather than the norm. Fire scientists and climatologists expect intense fire seasons to continue as climate changes persist.



The Pioneer Fire on the Boise National Forest, the largest fire in Idaho this year, burned more than 188,000 acres.



The Soberanes fire started on July 22 and was contained at 132,127 acres on October 15.

IN MEMORIAM: LONG-TIME BLM-NIFC EMPLOYEE PASSES AWAY UNEXPECTEDLY

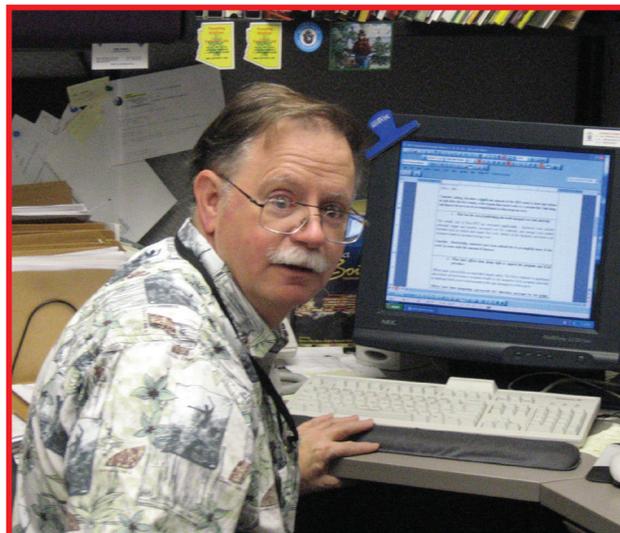
You may have seen him outside during fire drills, walking with a purpose from group to group, checking to ensure everyone made it out of the building and were accounted for and safe.

Or you may have heard him speak at a chili feed or other employee gathering, enthusiastically promoting the Combined Federal Campaign and the value of giving.

Depending on how long you've been at NIFC, you may even recall his work in wildfire education and his national efforts to promote learning and safety. In many ways, he has been a presence at NIFC for nearly 15 years.

As you may have heard, John Owens, a long-time friend and colleague for many, passed away Saturday, November 12, 2016 following a very brief illness. This sudden loss has left a hole in the fabric of BLM-NIFC and certainly for his wife, Barbara; son, Trevor and daughter, Kellyn, each of whom survive him.

John came to NIFC in the early 2000s as the BLM's first National Wildfire Education Specialist, a position created with the National Fire Plan as the nation expanded its interest and focus on wildfire issues. Nearly 10 years later, in 2010, John moved into the role of NIFC Safety Program Manager and spent his



remaining years watching out for employees' health and safety in all aspects of our life and work at the NIFC campus. He also became an integral part of BLM management team meetings when Ron Dunton became the Assistant Director and asked to begin each meeting with a safety presentation. John's last such presentation was November 7, the Monday before he passed away.

Information about a service will be provided as soon as it's available. In the meantime, please keep his family in your thoughts; and in John's honor: be safe, and be good to each other.

NICC SAYS GOODBYE TO A FRIEND AND CO-WORKER

On October 15, 2016, Page Liles passed away at home, with her family by her side, after battling an illness.

Page began working at NICC in the spring of 2014, and worked the equipment, aircraft and intelligence desks. "She was an outstanding employee, co-worker and friend to all of the NICC staff," said Bill Fletcher, assistant NICC manager. "We appreciated her calm, steady approach to the variable, often high volume workload at NICC. She is missed."

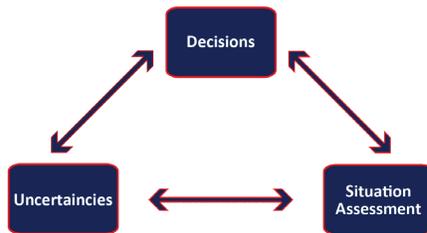
Page was a free spirit who loved her family, friends, and the outdoors. She was a passionate person when it came to her friends; she would go above and beyond to help a friend in need. Anyone lucky enough to have Page as a friend, had a friend for life. Page loved sharing her life with husband, Aaron Wolf, and was grateful be a mother to her daughter and two step children.



NORWEGIAN FIRE CHIEFS VISIT NIFC

Every other year, Norway sends candidates to NIFC to study the Incident Command System. The Norwegian Fire Officers Association and Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning sent three fire chiefs and a civil protection officer. Chief Fire Officer Geir Thorsen, Aalesund Fire Service; Executive Officer, Charlotte Fone, Civil Defense District Aust-Agder; Chief Fire Officer Tor-Inge Henriksen, Haugesund Fire Service; and Chief Fire Officer Morten Gallefos Meen, Bamble Fire Service arrived in Boise on August 15.

Norway uses an all-risk emergency preparedness system called “Enhettig ledelsessystem” (ELS) which translates to unified management system. ELS is similar to the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). The principals of ICS and ELS are the same concerning the span of command. ELS is a joint incident command between fire, medical and police.



In the Norwegian incident command system, a police incident commander provides overall command. Other commanders are appointed to make decisions based on joint command. The timeline of the emergency response operation is divided in stages with differences in situation assessment. Situation assessment is the basis for decisions, and uncertainties influence decision-making. However, decisions affect how uncertainties are perceived and how the situation is assessed. Uncertainties also affect the situation assessment, and the importance of uncertainties depends on the assessment of the situation. There is, in other words, interdependency between the three factors.

The major difference between both emergency response systems is education and specialization. ICS has many training courses while ELS has a two to three day class. Norway has generalized rather than specialized training. Norwegians are expected to complete their training course and then implement and perform all tasks instead of focusing on specific tasks and positions.

“We are nowhere close to using ICS as it is really intended, but we continue to strive toward that goal,” stated Tor-Inge Henriksen, Chief Fire Officer for Haugesund Fire Service.



THE FRIENDLY FACE OF NIFC REACHES RETIREMENT

Sorry, fire directors, it's not you. Nor is it the smokejumpers, the people who work at NICC, the security guards, or whoever happens to be interviewed on the local news that night. The real face of NIFC sits each morning at the reception desk in the Jack Wilson Building and tosses cheerful greeting after cheerful greeting to everyone who comes within eyeshot and earshot, whether they've been coming to work here for twenty years or two days. It's a job that Betty Percival has been doing for 19 years and 10 months. But as the saying goes, "all good things must come to an end." Betty is retiring at the end of November.

Betty Percival may be the most recognizable person – and certainly one of the most likeable -- at NIFC. "I love my job here," Betty says. "Don't tell my boss, but I'd probably do this for free." Although she never has made a trip to the fireline, flames are part of who she is. "I married a smokejumper and my dad was a structural firefighter. It's in my blood," Betty says. Her father fought fire in Enumclaw, Washington, a town about midway between Seattle and Tacoma, at the base of Mt. Rainier. It's the place where Betty was raised. "When I was in high school, I never thought I'd get out of there," she says. "After graduation, Dad got a job at Elmendorf Air Force Base, we moved to Alaska, and I married a smokejumper." She's been traveling ever since. "Let's see. We've lived in Fairbanks, three times in Boise, Washington, D.C., and Reno. All because of BLM fire. We moved to Port Angeles, Washington, after Roy (her husband) retired, but came back to Boise after one short year." After Roy gave up the parachute, he climbed through the ranks of BLM fire management, retiring as the associate director of fire for BLM. Jack Wilson was the director at the time.

If you know Betty at all, you recognize her great love of sunshine. Most summer days, she can be found basking in the morning sunlight behind the receptionist's desk. She credits growing up in rainy Western Washington and spending 13 years in Alaska as the reason why she yearns for long, hot days. "If it never rained or snowed again, I'd be happy, other than the place would dry up and blow away," she says.

Betty's days won't slow down when she stops coming to NIFC. Her future plans include traveling to visit her son and plenty of trips to Washington and Hawaii!



Perched at the main entrance to the Wilson Building, she greets new employees, old employees, contractors, family members, tourists and visitors right up to the president's cabinet level with the same friendly enthusiasm.

In her downtime, she will be working on needlework projects and other various crafts.

Watch for flyers to come out towards the end of November for Betty's retirement party. She thinks she's sneaking out under the radar but we, in External Affairs, are one step ahead of her!

Summer is her favorite time of the year for another reason. "I live for fire season. It's the adrenaline rush, the emergency part of what we do, the vitality of this place," she says. And she recognizes that she has the soft end of the deal. "I don't have to sleep in a bag for two weeks or get dirty on the lines or in fire camp." Her sunny disposition comes mostly from her mother, someone who, "No matter what happened, always had a smile on her face." Her friendliness and ability to remember a name means that no one is a stranger for long, once they've been greeted and signed the visitors' log. What keeps her coming back? "Oh my gosh. We have some awesome people here and the diversity of my job. Every day is different and it's always fun. The people here are nice, and I can help solve problems. That kind of service is right up my alley. I like helping people." As someone walks by the desk, she smiles and greets them and engages in friendly banter. It's a typical exchange for Betty, one that likely happens several dozen times on most days. The friendly face of NIFC is in good form. "I never have had a problem getting along with people," she says.

NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE VISITS NIFC

When we come to work in the summer, it is common to see activity on the Boise National Forest air tanker base right outside the NIFC confines. Usually the views include heavy air tankers and SEATS (Single Engine Air Tankers) landing, refueling and taking off right next near the smokejumper base. On the morning of November 7 we were privileged to witness the temporary staging of the extra-long semi hauling the National Christmas Tree. Stretched out on the retardant-stained concrete, the 80-foot Engelmann spruce remained overnight at this secure location before continuing on its journey to the nation's Capitol. Enormous banners down the sides of the truck with sponsor logos and signatures from federal agency workers, state employees, Idaho students, teachers, general public members and random passersby, completed the package from Idaho to be delivered to Washington D.C. in late November.

The tree grew up on the Payette National Forest, located just north of Boise. Two highly trained Forest Service

smokejumpers were tasked with getting the tree to the ground safely where it was packaged onto the "Big Idaho Potato" truck for the long road trip. Traveling with the tree are more than 18,000 ornaments created by Idahoans with reusable and recyclable materials.

Since the cutting of the tree in late October, it has traveled to Boise before going north to Coeur d'Alene and back south through central and eastern Idaho. Then it will continue on through the middle of the country to Washington D. C. where it will be up righted, fitted with lights and the additional Idaho ornaments.



While mostly enclosed in the truck, you can view the top 15 feet of the Engelmann Spruce.



Where heavy air tankers refuel and receive thousands of gallons of retardant in the summer, the National Christmas Tree from the Payette National Forest sits, waiting to continue its journey eastward.

NPS STAFF EXPLORE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS AT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Resiliency is key to sustaining success. This was one of several takeaways heard by National Park Service employees attending a two-day conference at Boise State University on September 14-15, 2016.

They were among more than 700 attendees of the fourth annual Women and Leadership Conference, sponsored by the Andrus Center for Public Policy. The theme for the 2016 conference was "Empowering through Knowledge." With a goal of creating better leaders and promoting gender balance, the conference introduced influential policy and business leaders who shared their insights and offered tools to help participants become leaders in their respective fields.

"This was one of the most fantastic leadership opportunities I've been involved in thus far in my career," said Shanelle Saunders, Yosemite National Park lead firefighter. "The experience was phenomenal, and the people I met greatly impacted me professionally and personally. It taught me



to not be afraid to talk about issues in the work place or at home, because those issues affect us greatly as a crew. The conference also emphasized being empowered to lead up, to learn to fail, and to get back up again."

Conference attendees, both men and women, heard thought-provoking presentations from keynote speakers, attended skill-building workshops, and engaged in networking sessions that included leaders from a variety of career fields. The

Continued on page 6



Continued from page 5

audience was encouraged to celebrate the achievements of women who have broken barriers and to inspire others to follow in their footsteps. The audience was treated to a premiere screening of the film, *The Hunting Ground*, followed by a discussion with film producer Amy Ziering.

Leaders in politics, academia, sports, the arts, and business shared personal stories of success and adversity, explored some of the reasons why women may lag behind men in leadership roles, and encouraged participants to explore both career and personal growth pathways.

“What I learned here only strengthens my belief in the benefits of diverse organizations,” said Structural Fire Branch Chief Hal Spencer. “Something that impressed me was discussion about the economic studies that show that an inclusive workforce improves the bottom line

for business. Even though this was titled ‘women and leadership’ this conference is for anyone wanting to learn leadership lessons and gain skills. Men will absolutely benefit from this as well.”

Attending the conference were staff from the Division of Fire and Aviation (DFAM) in Boise, Idaho and six NPS-sponsored scholarship recipients: Bonnie Bolser from Bandelier National Monument, Melissa Forder from the Southeast Regional Office, Mel Whitenack from Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Nina Dutton from the Pacific West Regional Office, Samantha Wendler from Gateway National Recreation Area, and Shanelle Saunders from Yosemite National Park. Prior to the conference, scholarship recipients met with staff from DFAM to discuss issues facing women in fire and aviation career fields.

BLM AT NIFC CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF FLPMA

October 21, 2016 marked the 40th anniversary of the BLM’s Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). BLM staff at NIFC took time out of their day to come together and celebrate this important milestone with cake, a group trivia challenge, and good conversation. Approximately 40 BLM employees joined in the celebration and festivities to celebrate the BLM’s rich history and principal legislation. BLM employees across the country also helped celebrate this anniversary, from an open house celebration in the California Desert District, to a conference at University of Colorado Boulder with BLM Director Neil Kornze.

FLPMA was signed into law by President Gerald Ford in 1976. This federal law marks the beginning of a major milestone that directs how the BLM governs public land. Today, every operation of the BLM is governed by this legislation. FLPMA has truly established the BLM as a multi-use agency that continues to be reflected to this day.

The BLM administers more than 247.3 million acres of public land in the United States. It was originally created by President Harry S. Truman in 1946 after combining the General Land

Office and the Grazing Service. Originally, the BLM was best known for selling public land to private land owners, and managing other lands that were considered “undesirable” to private land owners. However, with its official creation in 1946, the BLM adopted the mission “to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

It wasn’t until the early 1970’s that the BLM began to consider their own “Organic Act” and what it would mean for the organization. An Organic Act is an Act of the U.S. Congress that establishes a territory of the United States, or an agency, to manage certain federal lands. (In the absence of an organic law, a territory is technically classified as unorganized.) By 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act was passed, thereby providing the BLM with specific and clear legislation to permanently retain land and to manage the lands on behalf of all Americans. The passage of FLPMA repealed several hundred outdated and duplicative laws, provided the BLM with policy and management guidelines and authority, and gave the BLM enforcement authority. Additionally, FLPMA provides legislative direction to numerous specific interests and management areas.

The effects of this legislation are still significant today. BLM land provides opportunities to millions of Americans to explore and experience hunting, hiking, fishing, and many other outdoor opportunities. These same public lands also provide for minerals, grazing, timber, and energy, and contribute to the stimulation of local economies.



BIA STAFF ATTENDS GETTYSBURG STAFF RIDE

– “Serving tribes and helping them become self-determined, while taking responsibility to protect tribal assets, is a key mission for the BIA,” says Aaron Baldwin, Branch Director for the Branch of Wildland Fire Management. “In order for us to be successful in this, we must ensure our employees understand and practice the fundamentals of leadership.” That’s why, for the first time in BIA’s history, a cohort of nine mid-to-upper-level leaders attended Gettysburg Staff Ride (L-580) this October.

During the three-day training, leadership techniques, decisions and principles were introduced to students, making the 253 year old battlefield a living classroom. Using the NWCG, “Leading in the Wildland Fire Service publication and the book “Killer Angels” by Michael Shaara as guides, students transformed their notions of leadership into applicable principles.

The word ‘principle’ takes its root from the Latin word, principia meaning ‘foundations.’ To transform a notion into a principle, that then becomes part of one’s own being, is no easy task – it takes a lifetime. Despite this, the core principles of the Wildland Fire Service: Duty, Respect and Integrity - calls us to act from these, our strongest foundations.

One cannot walk the ground where 46,000 – 51,000 casualties occurred and not experience the weight of leadership. Nor can one not feel the tremendous sadness caused by mistakes we now glean as “lessons” – a gift hindsight offers. What character traits positioned the generals and officers for success and failure? How did they establish

and follow-through with leader’s intent? And when does having a bias for action create more challenge than success? These were just a few questions discussed during the three-days of training.

As the first cohort to go through the class, Robin White, BIA’s Branch Administrative Officer, thought that “having BIA represented at the staff ride increased the entire class awareness of the complexities of wildland fire management in Indian Country.” While groups presented their leadership perspective during exercises, BIA contributed a unique viewpoint most have never even considered. For example, what would the Union look like if there was a Bureau of Confederate Affairs, a Bureau whose mission is to preserve a way of life and culture?

While all students took away unique and deeply personal lessons, one lesson all students now hold is that we are expected, even charged to lead ourselves. Further, while we may not all be assigned the role of “leader,” we all are leaders – to ourselves, our peers and even to those we follow.

“It is my hope we can send other leaders from BIA’s fire management program to leadership classes such as this. It will help to set an example for others in our Bureau to follow,” concludes Baldwin.

“I felt like this course will greatly improve leadership as a whole within the BIA fire organization. I learned that communications and relationships are two very important factors in leadership. I am taking back with me the notion that leadership is action and good leaders will take the necessary steps to further the interests of their employees and the mission of the Agency.”

– Lucas Minton, Eastern Region
Fire Management Officer



Back Row (from left to right): Bob Roberts, Dave Underwood, Garth Fisher, Brig. Gen. Horace Porter, aka Mike Reetz, Mark Jackson, Joe Kafka, Darryl Martinez, and Lucas Minton Bottom Row: Robin White and Robyn Broyles



NPS DIVISION OF FIRE AND AVIATION CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL YEAR

This year, the National Park Service (NPS) has been celebrating its Centennial, and looking forward to entering its second century of stewardship. Over the past few months, there have been several Centennial-focused events for the NPS Division of Fire and Aviation (DFAM) in Boise.

On August 25, 2016, DFAM hosted a birthday party inviting all NIFC staff. The Founders Day celebration is an annual event that has been held for many years, but this year it was bigger and a great opportunity to show appreciation for not only DFAM staff but our interagency partners as well.

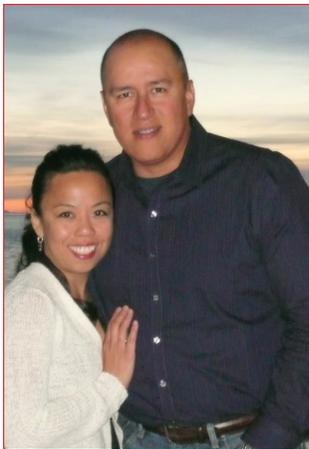
Last month, there were two more events that brought staff together. On October 1, the division hosted an employee and alumni picnic at Kristin Armstrong Municipal Park in Boise. Reaching out to many retirees as well as current and former employees of the National Park Service in southern Idaho, it was an opportunity to reconnect with old friends and meet some new ones as well. The highlight, outside of seeing familiar faces and enjoying great food, was playing in bubble balls. More than one individual was sore in the following days from bouncing in a competitive manner.

In mid-October, DFAM staff hosted NPS director, Jon Jarvis, at NIFC. The director spent several hours with staff, talking about the Service post-Centennial as well as topics that have recently come to the forefront, including sexual harassment and changing Service leadership. Jarvis had been in town for an Andrus Center for Public Policy presentation that took place at Boise State University that focused on the past 100 years as well as next century and how we engage with the American public who are vital to the future of the National Park System.

Thank you to all who participated in Centennial events; we are looking forward to 2017 and beyond for what the second century of the NPS will bring!



NEW LEAD PLANNER JOINS BIA STAFF



Adrian and Jeanette Grayshield

BIA, Branch of Wildland Fire Management welcomes Adrian Grayshield as our new Lead Planner under our Budget/Planning staff. He comes to our group from the Bureau of Land Management, Carson City Nevada.

Introduced to wildland fire right after high school, Adrian began working for BIA Western Nevada Agency. After serving in the Marine Corps, attending college, teaching school and generally becoming an “adult” he returned to fire in 2003, this time as a Morning Star Hotshot, located at BIA Western Nevada Agency.

In 2006 Adrian accepted a position with the BLM, serving two districts within Nevada. He eventually became the assistant fire management officer, supervising the BIA Western Nevada Agency fire management program.

Adrian and his wife expect to move to Boise/ Meridian in the near future, just in time to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary in December. They have two adult daughters, one of which will be moving to Boise with them. “I look forward to exploring the many fishing spots of Idaho and I will enjoy sampling the sushi restaurants in the Boise area. While we will miss our many friends in Carson City, Nevada, we anticipate making many new friends here in Boise.”