



# Burning Issues

May 2006



## Fuels Management Conference Highlights Success

More than 500 participants attended three days of presentations and one optional day of workshops at the first Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference titled "Fuels Management – How to Measure Success" in Portland, Oregon, in late March. The conference was co-sponsored by the National Interagency Fuels Coordination Group (NIFCG), The Nature Conservancy Global Fire Initiative, Joint Fire Science Program, U.S. Forest Service Research, National Fire Plan, Canadian Forest Service,

British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range Protection Program, and the National Center for Landscape Fire.

The NIFCG has representatives from five federal land management agencies and has been tasked to coordinate federal strategies for mitigating wildfire hazards through fuel treatments. Current representatives include Dick Bahr, National Park Service; Erik Christiansen, Bureau of Land Management; Dennis DuPuis, Bureau of Indian Affairs; John

Segar, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Tim Sexton with the USDA Forest Service. On behalf of NIFCG, Tim Sexton served as a keynote speaker and discussed the federal

Fuel Management Programs, focusing on reducing risk to communities while increasing ecosystem resilience and sustainability. Sexton reinforced to the attendees that wildland fuel conditions on federal wildlands have changed significantly over the last 100 years. The changes include: increased density of woody species; artificial fragmentation of fuel mosaics; exotic species invasions; and structural changes which reduce ecosystem resilience to fire.

Sexton noted that the primary goal of federal wildland fuel management is to reduce the unwanted impacts from wildfire, including threats to public safety, suppression costs, damage to natural and cultural resources, and damage to public and private

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*Some of the 500 attendees at the Fire BEhavior and Fuels conference held in Portland, Oregon, on March 27-30, 2006.*

## New Program to Help 9/11/01 Responders

Since the World Trade Center (WTC) disaster in 2001, many people have expressed concerns about the possibility of health effects associated with the events of that day that include exposure to the resultant smoke and debris. In response to these concerns, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided funds to the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness (OPHEP) to medically screen federal employees who responded to the WTC site or Staten Island recovery operation. The WTC Federal Responder Screening Program is designed to detect adverse health effects and will allow federal workers to receive a comprehensive, confidential medical

screening and test results. You are eligible for the program if you are a current, former, or retired federal employee and were involved in rescue, recovery, or cleanup operations in or around the WTC site or at any of the debris handling operations on Staten Island for at least one shift any time between September 11, 2001 and September 10, 2002.

In order to enroll, simply log on to the program's website at <https://wtcophep.rti.org> and select "Enroll in Program." A form will appear where you will answer a few eligibility questions and then fill in your name and contact information. After you register on-line, you will be contacted to schedule an examination at a location convenient for you.

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## Broyles Receives Sons of the American Revolution Fire Service Award

Paul Broyles was presented a Fire Safety Commendation Medal at the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) annual George Washington’s birthday banquet award ceremony held in Boise in February. The Old Fort Boise Chapter of the Idaho Society is the local affiliate of the SAR. Every February the chapter recognizes an individual in the fire management and law enforcement professions. The Law Enforcement Commendation Medal was awarded to Robert Rausch with Idaho State Police in Pocatello.

Having started his fire management career with the USDA-Forest Service in 1970, his diverse background keeps Paul reaching back to his “roots” in the field. Since 1997, Broyles has served as the National Park Service’s National Fire Operations Program Leader, with national oversight responsibilities for suppression, preparedness, safety, prevention, and more recently burned area rehabilitation and training and qualifications. Arriving at the NPS Fire Management Office at the National Interagency Fire Center in 1988, he has been a leader in the interagency fire arena to establish national qualification standards

to professionalize the fire management ranks and has been an tireless advocate for policy, products and interagency agreements to enhance the a safety of the work environment for firefighters and the public at large.

Since 1980, he has served on Type I and II Incident Management Teams in operations, safety, air support, and training capacities; he currently is an Incident Commander on a Great Basin Type I team. He has served on the National Wildfire Coordinating Group’s Training and Safety & Health Working Teams; he currently is a member of the Incident Operations Standards Working Team.

Paul’s love of the land is certainly in his genes. Paul’s father, Rod Broyles had a 36 year career with the National Park Service and his grandfather Dixon Freeland also had 36 years with the agency. Paul’s family is a “fire” family as the Broyles of Boise all work at the National Interagency Fire Center. His wife Gini works for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and his two daughters Andrea and Robyn both work for the Bureau of Land Management. And coincidentally, in recognition of the Sons of American Revolution, Paul is a direct descendant on his mother’s side to General Israel Putnam!



(Left to right) Bob Rausch, 2006 Law Enforcement Commendation Award, Idaho State Patrol, Pocatello; Jim Wellman, President Old Fort Boise Chapter Sons of the American Revolution; Paul Broyles, Fire Safety Commendation Award; John Freeman, Idaho SAR Registrar.

### Brit Rosso Receives “Lead by Example” Award

On February 9, 2006, Brit Rosso was presented with the Paul Gleason “Lead by Example” Award. Rosso was nominated for the award by his peers in the interagency Hotshot community for his outstanding skills in mentoring and teamwork. Rosso has served the last ten years as the Superintendent of the Arrowhead Hotshots based in Kings Canyon National Park.

“We are so proud of Brit’s accomplishments and we highly value his leadership within our fire program,” said David Bartlett, Acting Fire Management Officer for Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks. “It is a pleasure to see him receive this national award.”

More than one hundred fire managers from across the western United States participated in the award presentation during a course at the Wildland Fire Training and Conference Center in Sacramento, California.

The Paul Gleason “Lead by Example” Award is presented by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group to remember Paul Gleason and recognize individuals that exhibit his same spirit and dedication to leadership. During his career, Paul Gleason mentored firefighters, he studied and taught wildland fire, and through his contributions to the wildland fire community, improved firefighter safety. Gleason succumbed to cancer in 2003 following a wildland fire career that spanned several decades.



## Fuels Management Conference (cont.)

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improvements. He clarified however, that the federal agencies are not trying to reduce the number of acres burned by wildfire. It is likely that federal agencies will facilitate an increase in acres burned by unplanned ignitions. Wildland Fire Use and less aggressive attack on many suppression-objective wildfires present opportunities for suppression cost savings, reduced exposure of firefighters to hazards, and reductions in hazardous fuel. He also shared that federal wildland fire agencies have agreed on several key action areas in support of the goal to reduce impacts from wildfires. These action areas include: aligning federal fuels management policies, practices, and procedures prioritizing fuel treatments which have been identified as key components of Community Wildfire Protection Plans, provide by-products for local economies and energy production, reduce hazard on a landscape scale, and are cost-effective expanding wildland fire use as a means of treating fuels providing support for development and deployment of technologies (such as LANDFIRE and associated planning tools) for facilitating planning and implementation of fuel reduction projects managing ecosystems so that they are resilient to disturbance and sustainable in the goods and services which they provide to the American Public development of a work force which has the capacity and the capabilities to strategically manage fuels to obtain the greatest reduction in impacts from wildfire.

In fiscal year 2005 more than four million acres of hazardous fuel were treated on USDA and USDI lands. Gross area treated is not a necessarily a good indicator of progress toward

the goal of reducing unwanted impacts from wildfire. However, it is a good indicator of our increasing capability to implement treatments. There are a number of accounts of wildfires that were contained or where communities did not burn as a result of the fuels treatments accomplished since the National Fire Plan was implemented.

Sexton concluded that the NIFCG is working to improve our organizations and business practices. He encouraged the group to contact the NIFCG representatives and invited participants to learn more by visiting the website which is located at <http://www.nifc.gov/fuels>.

### Flexible Spending Accounts Reminder

The grace period for 2005 claims was extended to March 15th, 2006. As a result of this extension, the deadline for filing 2005 claims was moved from April 30 to May 31. All 2005 FSA claims that were incurred between January 2005 and March 15, 2006 must be submitted for payment by May 31, 2006. Any claims for 2005 submitted after this date will not be paid.

For more information, please visit the FSA website [www.fsafeds.com](http://www.fsafeds.com)

## The Combat Infantryman's Badge Awarded to Honorary SGT Smokey Bear

On the night of February 12th, 2006, while on a combat patrol with 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Division of the 172nd Stryker Brigade, Sergeant Smokey Bear was out of his hatch and exposed to an Improvised Explosive Device along with Staff Sergeant DJ Bowman. Both survived. For his contact with the enemy, and his will to survive in the face of adversity, the United States Army awarded Smokey Bear with the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

This coveted badge is the mark of a true warrior, not only in the fight against wildland fires, but in the fight against terrorism as well. Smokey's actions in the face of the enemy are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service. He brings great credit to the US Army, the US Forest Service, and himself.

Smokey has traveled in Iraq since August 2005 with the 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Division of the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. Smokey participates in every mission and acts as the Team's mascot. Smokey was relieved of service for a brief time to ease the fears of a very small, orphaned girl at a monastery. He currently lives with her. Smokey's replacement was deployed the next day and services the team once again.



Staff SGT DJ Bowman accompanied by Smokey in Iraq.



# Brush Up Your Media Skills for the SummerFire Season

Public support and understanding for what the wildland fire community does is vital to reaching our goals. Like it or not, the news media strongly influences public opinion about things like mega-fires, prescribed burns and other issues in fire management. As a “subject matter expert,” you never know when you might have the opportunity to represent your program, your agency and the entire wildland fire community in a media interview or a public presentation. As we approach what could be another active fire season, now is an opportune time to review some media skills. To accomplish this, test your knowledge with this quiz (answers provided below):

## 1. “Staying on message” means:

- a. Knowing your subject and sticking to it.
- b. Keeping in mind that you are representing your agency (no personal opinions).
- c. Steering tangential questions back to the message about the subject.
- d. All of the above.

## 2. What is the best way to handle a reporter’s question that contains an incorrect assumption or an inaccurate statement?

- a. Interrupt the reporter as soon as you detect the incorrect or inaccurate information.
- b. Repeat the incorrect or inaccurate information, then correct it.
- c. Clarify the incorrect or inaccurate information without repeating it, then respond to the question.

## 3. True or False: “Non-verbal communication is a minor part of a television news media interview.”

## 4. Which of these phrases should you avoid during an interview?

- a. “No comment.”
- b. “I can neither confirm nor deny that.”
- c. “Off the record.”
- d. “I’m not sure. Let me find out the answer to that question and get back to you.”

## 5. Which of the following is the best form of practice prior to an interview?

- a. Get a friend to play the role of the interviewer and go over the questions you expect to be asked.
- b. Consciously strive to make your responses both succinct and clear.
- c. Devise ways of “bridging” your responses back to your main points.
- d. Videotape or audiotape yourself so that you can critique your responses.

## 6. What is the best way to handle a hostile question, a loaded question, or a totally unexpected question?

- a. Fake a coughing fit and step away from the interview until you gather your wits.
- b. Scratch your head and say you can’t answer the question.
- c. Have a communications professional assist you before, during, and after the interview.

### 1. “Staying on message” means:

The correct answer is d. “Staying on message” is a skill that enables you to strategically focus on your main two or three points during an interview.

### 2. What is the best way to handle a reporter’s question that contains an incorrect assumption or an inaccurate statement?

You should avoid interrupting the interviewer regardless if he or she is saying something wrong or inaccurate. Also, a common mistake subject matter experts make is repeating the inaccurate or incorrect information given by the reporter. Simply state the correct information then move on with your answer. For example, here is a sample question. “If retardant is harmful to fish and wildlife, why is it being dropped on this fire?” You might say something like this: “Fire retardant is an effective way of slowing a fire down to buy our ground crews time to build fireline. Whenever we use it, we utilize buffer zones to protect aquatic habitat. Plus, in normal uses, retardant poses no threat to wildlife.”

If you repeat the incorrect terminology, your words could be taken out of context and used in ways that you might regret.

### 3. True or False: “Non-verbal communication is a minor part of a television news media interview.”

That is a **false** statement. Studies consistently show that the non-verbal communication you display as a spokesperson or subject matter expert is every bit as important (if not more important) than the content of the information you provide during an interview. So, remember to keep an appropriate facial expression and engage the interviewer. Have good posture. Prepare yourself before the interview so as to negate natural nervousness. Sunglasses and photo-gray glasses belong in your pocket during the interview. Your non-verbal communication is a huge part of the interview. Make sure the non-verbal complements the verbal.

### 4. Which of these phrases should you avoid during an interview?

You should avoid phrases a, b, and c during interviews. Using clichés like “no comment” and “I can neither confirm nor deny that” has a Pavlovian effect on reporters - it makes them want to learn more about the subject you just ducked. As for speaking “off the record,” it is best to assume that **anything** you say in a conversation with a reporter can find its way into print or into a broadcast. The information may be simply attributed to “an anonymous government official.” On

the other hand, it is entirely appropriate, and even preferable, to use response ‘d’ above if you are asked a question that you cannot readily answer.

### 5. Which of the following is the best form of practice prior to an interview?

These are ALL good ways to practice before an interview. The key point is this: if you want to give an excellent interview and increase the chance your information will be accurately portrayed in the press, there is nothing like a little practice before the interview to make it more successful.

### 6. What is the best way to handle a hostile question, a loaded question, or a totally unexpected question?

The majority of interviews turn out just fine, because most members of the media are professionals who are trying their best to do a good job. But if the subject of the interview is sensitive or controversial, contact a public affairs specialist or public information officer. These specialists have advanced training in media relations, and they will be happy to help you. You’ll not only make it through the interview, you’ll walk away feeling like you nailed it.



## New Features on the NPS Fire and Aviation Website

NPS Fire & Aviation has added some new features to the external NPS Fire & Aviation website – <http://www.nps.gov/fire>. The new information is presented in the Macromedia FLASH format which provides an interactive way to learn about fire history, fire management in the National Park Service through four case studies, as well as student quizzes to test your knowledge about fire.

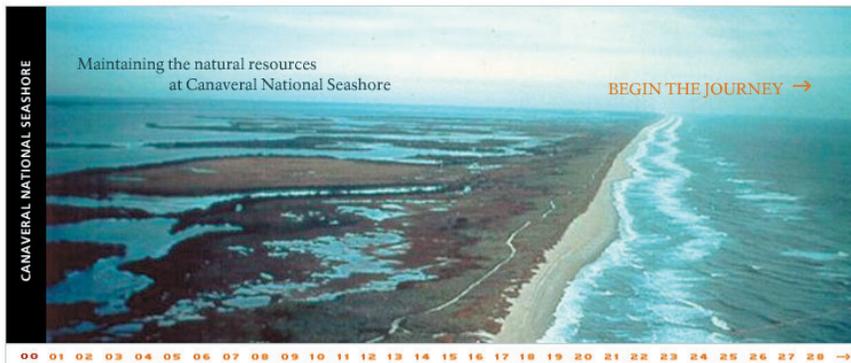
The Fire Timeline presents snippets of Fire History from the 1600's to the present in six different categories: Large Fires and Fatalities; Operational Inventions and Development; Policy and Law; Wildland Fire Operations; Fire Quotes and Perspectives; and Research, Education, and Public Awareness.

Parks featured in this first roll-out of case studies include Homestead National Monument of America, Canaveral National Seashore, and Voyageurs National Park. In addition, there is a general case study that provides an overview of prescribed fire – from planning to execution.

There is a further explanation regarding the Timeline, quizzes, and each of the case studies below. You will find links for them scattered throughout the website, however, the Student Quizzes are housed at [http://www.nps.gov/fire/educational/edu\\_stu\\_firequiz.html](http://www.nps.gov/fire/educational/edu_stu_firequiz.html), while the Timeline and Case Studies are all housed at [http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti\\_casestudies.html](http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti_casestudies.html). Text versions of the Timeline and Case Studies are also available in the same location.



Fire History Timeline - [http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti\\_timeline\\_check.htm](http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti_timeline_check.htm) Explore the past events that have shaped fire policy in the United States today.



Canaveral National Seashore Case Study - [http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti\\_caseStudy\\_CANA\\_check.htm](http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti_caseStudy_CANA_check.htm) Using prescribed fire to maintain the natural resources and habitat at Canaveral National Seashore, Florida.



Prescribed Fire Case Study [http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti\\_caseStudy\\_RX\\_check.htm](http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti_caseStudy_RX_check.htm) What is the process behind using fire as a management tool? Learn all that goes into planning and executing a prescribed fire.



Voyageurs National Park Case Study [http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti\\_caseStudy\\_VOYA\\_check.htm](http://www.nps.gov/fire/utility/uti_caseStudy_VOYA_check.htm) The story of a Wildland Fire Use event that took place during summer 2004 - The Section 33 Fire.

## The Big Move

After six weeks in temporary work space, the National Park Service has moved back into its new and improved home. When they learned the office needed to be re-carpeted, the NPS put its “Organizational Effectiveness” training to good use. The office opted for a nearly complete remodel of the National Park Service office in the Jack Wilson building to increase efficiency within the fire program.

While developing their “Organizational Effectiveness” skills, the NPS office discussed the many hindrances placed on the employees due to office setup. The NPS elected to make the most of its scheduled re-carpeting, and decided on a ceiling-down remodel of nearly the entire NPS office.

Standard fluorescent lights were replaced with full spectrum lighting. The full spectrum lighting provides a warm subtle light that creates less eyestrain than traditional cool white fluorescent bulbs at about one-quarter the operating cost of standard incandescent bulbs. The NPS preformed a test run on half of the office before purchasing lights for the entire office. The florescent bulbs



*The NPS suite was ready for new carpet.*

fit directly into pre-existing ceiling fixtures so no modifications were needed.

In addition to lighting, the office chose lighter colored wall paint, a different carpet pattern, and base board trim. Normally one wouldn’t put so much effort into the details, but the Park Service did away completely with cubicle walls along the perimeter of the office, electing to attach work surfaces and shelf systems directly to the wall. Wall attachments created an additional six inches of space for most cubicles, and 1 foot for others opening up almost 70 square feet of usable space.

Cubicle sizes were standardized allowing for the integration of off site NIFC NPS employees (NIFC North, and the office on Vinnell Way). Cube dwellers were also offered three choices for cubicle layouts, each person could tailor their workspace to their individual work style.

With the redesign, new enclosed offices were created on the north side of the office, so each Program Leader now has private office space, and work groups or programs now work in the same vicinity to allow for impromptu meetings.

Among some of the major changes, NIFC employees will find that the main entrance to the office was moved further east to allow for “flow” of traffic, and the copy machine and coffee maker have been moved to what used to be the storage room and is now the office mailroom and equipment room.

The NPS office has become a model of efficiency other bureaus and agencies may one day decide to replicate. Special thanks go to the NPS Space Committee for making this transition happen as smoothly as it did. Their tireless efforts beautifully orchestrated a bevy of Office Pavilion employees, painters, construction workers, contractors, and NIFC “lookie-loos” without seriously impacting their already full work load. For those interested, the NPS will be hosting an open house on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Please stop buy and check out the new “digs.”

**NPS Open House**

**Stop by and visit the new NPS suite.**

**When: May 12**  
**Time: 11:30 am - 1:30 pm**

