



Burning Issues

Spring 2009

FIRE DIRECTORS REPRESENT NIFC IN AUSTRALIA

Dan Smith, fire director for the National Association of State Foresters, and Brian McManus, chief of the FWS Fire Management Branch, were part of the U.S. contingent that recently visited Victoria, Australia. Smith and McManus travelled south crossing 17 time zones to represent the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) in Australia. Part of their mission was to attend the debriefing and close-out for the American fire resources who had been assigned to fill various specialized roles in the Australian fire fight. The other focus of their visit was to study the fire management program in Australia in order to look for opportunities to enhance the coordination and idea sharing between the two nations.

“We certainly have parallel issues in the realm of managing wildland fire,” McManus said. “During our tour, we identified numerous opportunities to further

our coordination. We all realize that continuing to work together will ultimately greatly benefit all of us into the future.”

McManus and Smith were given a tour of fire facilities around the state. They got a firsthand look at the coordination center which handles the movement of resources in Victoria including personnel and equipment. They visited fire research centers and equipment development sites to see some of the most technologically advanced tools of the trade. All aspects of the Australian fire program including training, mobilization, operations, community outreach, and prescribed burning were represented in the tour.

The NIFC pair also was able to visit nearly all of the U.S. personnel performing their assigned duties in the field.

“Visiting our resources scattered around the state performing so many different duties allowed us to actually

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Intense fire behavior observed in Australia.

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see that they were being effectively integrated into the Australia organization,” said Smith. “Our Type I crew was very engaged in implementing good, sound fire tactics. Our command and general staff folks were very adaptive and flexible in how they were used. Our BAER (Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation) Teams successfully provided a model from which the Australians plan to develop their own teams.”

A sobering stop for Smith and McManus was at the town of Marysville where dozens of fatalities occurred this year during the Kilmore East Murrindindi Complex which joined the King Lake Complex to burn over 1 million acres in a day and overran the community.

“Only one business was left standing in the downtown area,” said McManus. “There were just burnt trees and twisted metal remaining in the bulk of the business district.”

The tour stopped by the site of some of Australia’s most historic fires before concluding in Melbourne for the official send off of the American fire personnel.

The NWCG has now extended associate (non-voting) membership to the Australia/ New Zealand Forest Fire Managers Group.



An Australian sector commander watches as the fire makes a significant run.

MARY TABER RECEIVED UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Each year, the University of Idaho Alumni Association highlights alumnus/alumna who have graduated within the past 10 years and who have an exceptional career record thus far with indications of continued outstanding attainment in the future. This year, the Alumni Achievement Award was presented to Mary Taber, the national fire ecologist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the National Interagency Fire Center.

Taber received her bachelor’s degree in park and recreation resource management from Michigan State University in 1982 and then later was awarded her Masters of Natural Resources degree with a graduate certificate in fire ecology, management and technology in 2005. She is the agency’s lead for fire effects monitoring, smoke management and managing wildland fire for resource benefit. As a faculty member at National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute in Tucson, Arizona, Taber co-teaches two courses on using fire to meet resource management objectives. Her current projects include leading a national agency task group to implement recent changes in federal fire

policy, and developing training modules to enhance fire effects monitoring skills. During the past several fire seasons, Taber has led implementation plan development and decision analysis for large western wildfires as well as for post-hurricane fuel hazard evaluations.

After a 25-year career with the National Park Service, she accepted her present position with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in August of 2006 to pursue her interests in wildland fire management. Her favorite past assignments included patrolling the far reaches of Yellowstone Lake by canoe and horseback, rappelling out of helicopters and teaching leadership classes in the national parks of Hawaii.

With husband Michael, she enjoys sea kayaking and telemark skiing in the Yellowstone ecosystem and traveling throughout the American West, Mexico and the Caribbean.

Congratulations to Mary Taber for her educational achievements and dedication to the wildland fire community.



INVENTIONS TO REVOLUTIONIZE FIREFIGHTING

by BLM External Affairs staff

One of the hidden perks of working at NIFC is getting to talk to cutting edge scientists, engineers, and inventors who are nurturing ideas to revolutionize the art and science of wildland fire suppression. We also get to speak with people who think they are cutting edge scientists, engineers, and inventors. See if you can figure out which group suggested the following ideas to revolutionize wildland firefighting.

One woman called and suggested fire agencies “put sprinklers on the trees” in the forest and turn them on when a fire approaches. She was puzzled when we explained that even a single acre of forest can have hundreds of trees, and for that and other reasons, it probably wasn’t feasible to use sprinklers in the forest. Evidently she had not considered this.

Another caller suggested we attach remotely controlled fire extinguishers to trees in the woods. You guys put one extinguisher at the top of the tree, another at the middle and a third one at the bottom, he suggested. These fire extinguishers would be triggered by heat sensors, see. That way, when a fire approaches, it sets off the fire extinguishers and viola! the fire goes out! If that wasn’t feasible, he added, you could always augment the fire extinguishers by dropping cakes of dry ice from airplanes.

One guy was hesitant to tell us his idea, insinuating that we might cravenly steal his idea and profit from

it ourselves. After some wheedling, it turned out that his idea was to drop chemical bombs from airplanes to put out fires. We assured him this concept has been thoroughly explored.

In the same vein, an inventor from Bulgaria once contacted NIFC and requested a down-payment of \$20 million (yes, million) before he would divulge his invention. It must have been a really good invention for that kind of money.

Another technically-minded citizen suggested we work with the Air Force to fight fires. F-16 pilots have nothing better to do, this person mused, so why couldn’t they drop bombs on forest fires? The concussion of the bombs would snuff out the fires. At the risk of being perceived as pessimistic, we asked if bombing fires might possibly do more damage than the fire itself.

Speaking of jets, another caller suggested the wildland fire services acquire surplus jet engines and mount them on flatbed trucks. When a fire starts, back the trucks up along the flank of a wildfire and light up the engines. You blow candles out on a birthday cake; why wouldn’t this work?? (One wonders if the trucks might become airborne....)

Then there was the elderly gentleman who was totally convinced that dropping large rubber bladders filled with water was the solution to the fire problem in the western U.S. In his mind, these big water balloons would burst on impact and drown fires. He became incensed when we suggested that this idea was perhaps impractical.

A couple of years ago, a caller urged the fire agencies to establish a system of firewatchers, who would spot smoke from a newly-ignited fires and report their location by radio. We gently replied that this system was actually implemented in the early 20th century, but that satellite technology, aircraft, and other innovations in communication and remote sensing have significantly reduced the need for human fire lookouts. “Remote what?” was the caller’s reply.

One of the classic calls was from a serious individual who suggested dropping tanker loads of watermelons. (“They are the same color as regular fire retardant, they have high water content, and they’re more natural.”)

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GRAND CANYON NP HELITACK AND SEARCH AND RESCUE CREW RECEIVES IGOR I. SIKORSKY HUMANITARIAN SERVICE AWARD

On February 23, 2009, at the Helicopter Association International Heli-Expo Awards Banquet, "Salute to Excellence", members of Grand Canyon National Park's helitack and search and rescue crews received the Igor I. Sikorsky Award for Humanitarian Service in recognition of their efforts during the short-haul rescue of sixteen stranded boaters on August 17, 2008.

Havasu Canyon, a popular side canyon of the Grand Canyon, flash flooded as a result of heavy, localized, monsoon rains in August of last year. The flood waters necessitated the evacuation of almost 400 people from Havasu Canyon and the Village of Supai (located about 75 air miles west of Grand Canyon Village), and washed the boats of a private rafting party that had gone ashore downstream. A Grand Canyon National Park search and rescue team found the party of 16 rafters and guides stranded on a ledge more than 30 feet above the floodwaters at the confluence of Havasu Creek and the Colorado River. The rescue team, consisting of a Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters pilot, five members of Grand Canyon National Park's helitack crew and a park ranger/paramedic, used a short-haul rescue technique to move group members, two at a time, from the ledge to the shore of the Colorado River. From there, they boarded the helicopter and be flown to Hualapai Hilltop for transport by bus to a Red Cross shelter in Peach Springs, Arizona.

The Igor I. Sikorsky Award for Humanitarian Service is sponsored each year by Sikorsky Aircraft in honor of its founder, and is presented to the person(s) who



Papillon Helicopter's MD 900 on contract to Grand Canyon National Park sitting on the stone shore that stranded rafters were transported to via short-haul. NPS photo from video by Brandon Torres



The image everyone remembers. Helitack crew members wait to receive two members of a stranded rafting party being lowered to shore by helicopter. NPS photo from video by Brandon Torres.

best demonstrates the value of civil rotorcraft to society by saving lives, protecting property, and aiding those in distress. According to the program for the 2009 "Salute to Excellence", the evacuation required, "precision flying under difficult conditions due to the tight canyon and the need to hover for prolonged periods in close proximity to the canyon wall." According to Jay Lusher, Grand Canyon National Park's helicopter program manager, the need to work and land right next to rushing water only increased the challenges as the movement of the water can prove disorienting to pilot and crew.

Seven individuals were honored for their efforts during the rescue, Helicopter Program Manager Jay Lusher, Helitack Squad Leader John Yurcik, seasonal Helitack Crew Member Sean Naylor, seasonal Helitack/Paramedic Nate Becker, seasonal Helitack Ali Ulwelling, Ranger/Paramedic Brandon Torres, and Helicopter Pilot Bryce Barnett of Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters. But according to Lusher, "it just says Grand Canyon Helitack on the award, but to us it includes our vendor (Papillon), ...all the people who work for them and all the people who work for the National Park Service. We see ourselves as one giant crew that works together to accomplish all the missions we have."

Other nominees considered for the 2009 award included the Orange County Fire Authority Air Operations, STARS Aviation Canada, Inc., and the Manaus Squadron of the Brazilian Air Force. Previous winners of the award



Inventions... continued from page 3

Can't you just see this? "Tanker 5-1, we'd like you to lay the watermelon line across the ridge...."

One aspiring inventor informed us that he had spent eight years developing a unique water delivery system to help with firefighting. His idea involved suspending a large bucket beneath a helicopter and outfitting the bucket with a remotely controlled trapdoor that allows the pilot to drop water right where he wants it. It was tough—especially after the guy spent eight years working on his idea—but we had to burst his bubble. We toyed with the idea of sarcastically suggesting the fellow look up the word "research" in his dictionary, but as Elvis said, don't be cruel.

Another caller suggested the fire agencies fire mortar shells filled with retardant at a fire perimeter. "It'll make firefighting a lot safer, because no one has to get close to the flames," he explained. "You can set up the artillery at multiple locations far away and lob shells to extinguish the fire." When we asked him how much retardant he thought would be contained in one mortar shell, he seemed affronted that we would even question his idea.

Sometimes, callers are angered that we don't take them more seriously. Sometimes they are crestfallen that someone else already thought of their idea. Regardless of the idea, though, we are willing to listen. After all, someone with enough gumption to call the National Interagency Fire Center and suggest their latest, greatest firefighting idea at least deserves to have their idea heard. It can be pretty amazing (and funny) to hear what people come up with. And who knows? Someday we might get a call from someone with a really good idea. The next Pulaski might be right around the corner.

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include aircraft involved in Hurricane Andrew and Hurricane Katrina air operations, the Government Flying Service of Hong Kong, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Turkish Armed Forces/Red Star Helicopter Association, the South African Air Force Rescue Crew and Soviet Union aircrews involved in relief efforts following the Chernobyl nuclear power station accident.

Interagency Unit Aviation Officer Michael Ebersole said, "this is the most prestigious award received in the 36-plus year history of Grand Canyon National Park's aviation program...". Congratulations Grand Canyon helitack and search and rescue crews and Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters on a job extraordinarily well done.



Helitack Squad Leader John Yurcik, Helicopter Pilot Bryce Barnett, Helicopter Program Manager Jay Lusher and seasonal Helitack Crew Member Sean Naylor were on hand to accept the Igor I. Sikorsky Award for Humanitarian Service on behalf of Grand Canyon National Park and Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters. NPS photo by Michael Ebersole

To see the video footage of the rescue, please go to <http://www.nps.gov/grca/parknews/short-haul.htm>. To learn more about the park's helicopter program, contact Helicopter Program Manager Jay Lusher at 928-638-7921. To learn more about the park's search and rescue program, contact Ken Phillips at 928-638-7792.

REINSCH GETS NEW STYLE

On Saturday March 14th Mrs. Boise International Angelina Garcia hosted a fundraiser at Two Rivers Salon and Spa to benefit Locks of Love. National Park Service employee, Patricia Reinsch, took the opportunity to donate over 10 ½ inches of her hair to the cause and receive a free cut and style from hair stylists at Two Rivers.

Locks of Love is a public non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children under the age of 18 suffering from long-term medical hair loss from any diagnosis. The children restore their self esteem and their confidence which enables them to face the world and their peers.

Article contributions and photograph by Eagle Independent writer Mickie Turner-Park – <http://www.eagleindependent.com/>. Used with permission.



BIA ARSON SPECIALIST DENNIS DUPUIS HONORED AT WETIP NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Dennis Dupuis, associate director for Fire Use and Fuels, BIA- NIFC was honored April 24th at the WeTip National Conference, held at the Historic Mission Inn Hotel in Riverside, California.

Dupuis and his wildland arson fire team took on the challenge of educating tribal members on Indian reservations nationwide about the WeTip anonymous arson hotline program and the benefits that it provides for tribal members. Over the past six years, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has actively pursued the development of a wildland fire investigation program. This program accurately identifies fire cause trends and is critical to the success of the WeTip fire prevention program. This effective program also provides equally important information that is used in determining and identifying those responsible for unwanted fire. In those cases involving arson, identifying the perpetrator is of vital public interest.

The creation and the success of the WeTip/BIA partnership is credited to Dupuis and his entire team. Dupuis has spent his career working in Indian Country. Years ago, the BIA saw the need for a cohesive national program, and over the last few years has worked diligently toward putting that goal in place. He challenged his team to take on the responsibility of educating Investigators about the anonymous WeTip Arson Hotline program and the potential benefits to Indian Country. Since its start, information called into WeTip has aided law enforcement in solving nearly 15,000 criminal cases and convicting over 8,500 dangerous criminals, and aiding law enforcement in seizing over 345 million in illegal drugs and narcotics and combating arson fires.

Dupuis started with the BIA in 1978 working on the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation. Since then, he has worked for the BIA, Albuquerque Area Office, Forest Manager for the Flathead Indian Reservation, and Tribal FMO for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. He currently works at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise Idaho as the associate director for Fire Use and Fuels in the BIA. He is the national program lead for the Hazardous Fuels Reduction program in Indian Country and is a member and past chair of the National Interagency Fuels Coordination Group.



WeTip was created in 1972 as a direct response to law enforcement's need for information from citizens who know about a crime but are reluctant to give that information because they fear reprisal from the criminal. WeTip provides the anonymous hotline services to communities nationwide, 24 hours a day 365 days a year. The identity of the informant is never known to anyone, not even WeTip.

WeTip offers up to \$10,000 for information leading to an arrest and conviction of someone setting arson fires on Indian land. Calls regarding arson fires anywhere can be made to WeTip at 800-47-ARSON.

Article submitted by Susan Aguilar, Chief Executive Officer, WeTip, Riverside, California

Tour of NIFC for New Employees

External Affairs will be hosting an employee tour each quarter. If you would like to take a tour of the base, please contact Jayne Tabb at 387-5457.

Next Tour Date:
August 14.



NPS ANNOUNCES 2008 FUELS AND ECOLOGY AWARD WINNERS

The National Park Service announced the winners of the 2008 National Park Service (NPS) Fuels and Ecology Awards at the Intermountain and Pacific West Regions Fire Management Workshop in San Antonio, Texas the last week of January 2009. The winners for each award are:

- **The Brad Cella Award for Achievement in Managing Fuels:** Midwest Regional Office, Nebraska
- **The Achievement in Promoting Fire-Adapted Human Communities Award:** Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Tennessee/Kentucky
- **The Achievement in Restoring and Maintaining Fire-adapted Ecosystems Award:** Corky Conover, Pacific West Regional Office, California
- **The Achievement in Appropriate Management Response to an Unplanned Ignition Award:** Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming/Montana/Idaho
- **The Achievement in Implementing Adaptive Management Award:** Resource Management staff, Yosemite National Park, California; and Nelson Siefkin, Pacific West Regional Office, California

The NPS Fuels and Ecology Program Awards promote those areas of emphasis important to the mission of the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior (DOI). The awards recognize five areas selected from the *NPS Wildland Fire Management Strategic Plan* and the DOI Wildland Fire Performance Measures. The awards acknowledge those programs that have best aligned their efforts with the DOI and NPS Hazard Fuels Program goals.



David Vela, NPS Southeast Regional Director presents the fuels and ecology award to Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area staff. From right: David Vela, Regional Director; Stennis Young, Superintendent; Gordon Wissinger, Associate Regional Director, and park rangers Frank Graham and Tommy Barnes.



From left: Robin Wills, Taro Pusina, Corky Conover, Tim Klukas, and Joe Krish received their awards and recognition at the joint fire management workshop in San Antonio, Texas in January.

The *Brad Cella Award - Achievement in Managing Fuels* recognizes diligence and proficiency in managing fuels funds to reduce risk to critical park values. This award looks at programmatic implementation of projects that have effectively reduced risk to park(s) values.

The *Achievement in Promoting Fire-Adapted Human Communities Award* recognizes contributions to the designation of a "Firewise Community," Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and/or significantly lowered the risk of wildfire negatively impacting a community.

The *Achievement in Restoring and Maintaining Fire-adapted Ecosystems Award* recognizes efforts and fuels program that have contributed to moving or maintaining National Park Service lands in desired conditions.

The *Achievement in Appropriate Management Response to an Unplanned Ignition Award* recognizes successful management of one or more unplanned ignitions, resulting in achieving resource management goals, hazard fuel reduction objectives, cost containment, and safety for firefighters and the public.

The *Achievement in Implementing Adaptive Management Award* recognizes substantial promotion of the use of adaptive management in their area of influence.

Award recipients in each of the five areas of achievement receive a plaque to display at their home office as well as commemorative embroidered jackets and a monetary award of \$5,000. The recipients may use the monetary award as they choose.

The National Park Service congratulates all winners of the 2008 National Park Service Fuels and Ecology Awards.

NIFC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION EVENTS

We must begin by saying thank you to all who participated in the many fun activities in the last six months. We couldn't do it without you!!

The Halloween party in October was a smashing success. The Forest Service employees hosted the soup potluck and held contests for best costume, ugliest/wackiest hat, and decorated mini pumpkin. There was a silent auction of baskets created by each of the agencies and the NIFC Employees' Association officers. In addition the party kicked off the annual canned food drive to benefit the Idaho Food Bank.

November's Book Sale and Craft Auction was also a success. Please start saving your books now because it will happen again this coming November.

The National Park Service hosted the **Children's Christmas Party** in December and did a terrific job. The kids always love this party and have such a great time. You might want to circle your calendar for this year's party on December 12.

On December 16, the Salvation Army collected the toys employees donated to the annual **holiday toy drive**. Employees took tags from our giving tree and brought in gifts. There were bikes and trikes, electric guitars and soccer balls, dolls, teddy bears, games, gift cards, and so many other wonderful things. Each year NIFC employees seem to provide greater and greater help to children in need.

The Employees' Association officers hosted the **Adult Christmas Party** at Boise Centre on the Grove. Kolleen Shelley's group "Loose Change" provided the music this

year. As always the food was amazingly good, the price of \$15 per person was a terrific bargain, and the company was awesome. **Circle December 5** on your calendar for this year's party. Start thinking sarongs, flip flops, and hula for **we are having a luau**. Watch for further information as the year goes along.

Two events in February kept everyone busy. The **Valentine Cookie Sale** was a lot of fun with cupids delivering cookies all over the base on February 13. Fifty dozen cookies were purchased and sold. WOW! Then on February 18, the Association had its annual **free pizza party** for all NIFC employees. It was held at the Smokejumper loft and celebrated their grand reopening. Eric Reynolds and his crew provided both static and live displays to show some of the things they do in their job. Eighty pizzas were eaten.

The **Spring Barbecue and Monument Site Cleanup** was held on May 12 and hosted by Fish and Wildlife Service. Approximately 125 people participated in the barbecue and about 15 people worked on the monument cleanup. The food was delicious but the weather was cold and windy, driving a lot of eaters back inside.

The next function for the Association is a FAMILY PICNIC. It's going to be held at Municipal Park on **June 6 from 5 – 9 p.m.** We have reserved the Pin Oak section right next to the playground. There will be a barbecue and other fun and games. The Association will provide hotdogs, hamburgers and the fixings, along with the table set-ups (plates, napkins, and utensils). Everyone else can bring their favorite "go withs" like potato salad, macaroni salad, chips, beans, etc. We are sorry but neither alcohol nor pets

are allowed this time. (Park rules, not ours.) If you'd like, bring Frisbees, volleyball equipment, etc. We are going to trust Mother Nature to provide fine picnic weather. This will be a great chance to mingle with co-workers in a setting away from the work place. We hope you all will attend. Look for the flyer that will be sent out soon.

Association Officers:

- President – Elna Black
- Vice-President – Betty Percival
- Secretary – Bonnie Bradshaw
- Treasurer – Nancy Hunt
- Adjunct – Tammy Denney

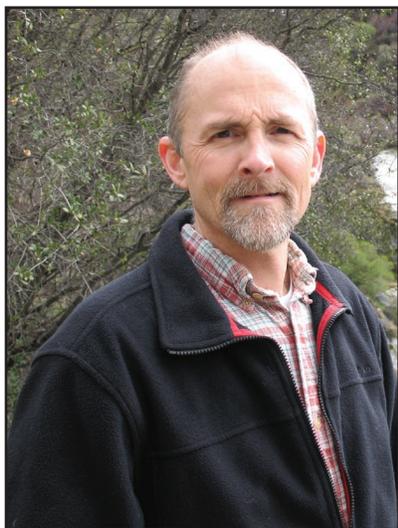


NEW STAFF MEMBERS BRING 150+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT

The National Park Service Division of Fire and Aviation, which consists of the branches of Wildland Fire, Structural Fire and Aviation, has recently filled nine positions, with staff bringing over 150 years of experience to the Division. The majority of these national office positions are located at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), in Boise, Idaho.

Branch of Wildland Fire:

William “Bill” Kaage arrived in mid-April to serve as the Branch Chief for Wildland Fire and National Fire Management Officer for the National Park Service. Since 2005, Bill has served as the Deputy Regional Fire Management Officer for Operations in the Pacific West Region of the NPS. Prior to that, he spent 9 years as the fire management officer (FMO) for Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks in California. Kaage started his career in 1983 as a firefighter on the Clearwater National Forest in Idaho, and has over twenty-five years of experience in the area of fire and resource management.



William “Bill” Kaage

Dan Buckley began his duties as the Wildland Fire Operations Program Leader on January 18. Although this is a new position for Dan, he has been working in fire management for 32 years, the past four of which have been at the national level as the Fuels and Fire Use Specialist. Before coming to Boise, Dan held various fire positions including engine crew member, helitack crew member, various positions on the Arrowhead Hotshot Crew over 16 seasons, Prescribed Fire Specialist and Fire Management Officer for the Bay Area National Parks (Golden Gate NRA, Point Reyes NS, Eugene O’Neill NHS and John Muir NHS), and Fire Use Specialist and Prescribed Fire Manager at Yosemite National Park. He currently holds multiple qualifications including Incident Commander Type 3, Burn Boss Type 1, Fire Use Manager 1, Fire Behavior Analyst, and is the Operations Section Chief on one of the Great Basin Type 1 teams.

Chad Fisher returned to the National Park Service as Safety and Prevention Program Manager



Dan Buckley

on March 1, after two years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as the National Fire Training Specialist. Chad’s 19 years of fire experience as a Fire Use Module leader, crew leader, helitack crew foreman, smokejumper, hotshot, engine foreman, and Division Supervisor with a Type 1 Incident Management Team has educated him regarding the various safety aspects and concerns in firefighting. In addition, Chad has worked on various national level projects dealing with employee training, development, and firefighter safety for the past seven years while at the National Interagency Fire Center.

Miranda Stuart came from FWS’s Texas Mid-Coast Refuge Complex where she was the Fire Effects Monitor and Geographic Information Specialist (GIS) Specialist for the past six years. While there, she developed a fire effects monitoring program, vegetation monitoring and modeling, oversaw the Fire Program Analysis (FPA) data entry and GIS databases for the fire management

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Chad Fisher



Miranda Stuart

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unit, and was a member of the fire crew. Miranda is currently a Division Supervisor Trainee with the Southern Area Type 1 Red Team and a developer and instructor for the S-341, GIS Specialist for Incident Management course. With 14 years in fire / federal management, Miranda began her duties as the Operations Specialist at PFTC in Tallahassee, FL on January 4. Bill Yohn began his permanent position as the wildland fire capital equipment, facilities and geospatial data analyst. Bill first came to the Fire Management Program Center in summer 2008 as a detailer

for Geographic Information System (GIS) support and data management. Prior to his arrival, he spent four years in the Pacific West Region assisting parks with data needs for Fire Program Analysis (FPA). Bill arrived to Boise full time late in 2008.

Mark Fitch worked for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as the Arizona Interagency Air Resource and Smoke Management Coordinator for the past three years. While with the USFS, he was the liaison between federal land managers and the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) coordinating daily prescribed fires and reviewing industrial source air permits and NEPA documents. Prior to his USFS position, Mark was with ADEQ's Air Quality Division for ten years as the state's Prescribed Fire Coordinator working on air quality modeling and data quality control. Mark has over 13 years of experience in air quality and smoke management and started as the branch's Smoke Management Specialist on January 18.

Branch of Structural Fire:

Brian Johnson is returning to NPS and the United States after ten years in Japan working for the Marine Corps Bases Japan Fire Department. While in Okinawa, he worked as a training chief, operations chief, deputy chief, and fire chief. For the past four years, as the fire chief, Brian has overseen the fire prevention bureau, which includes nine fire inspectors and a plan reviewer. Before heading overseas, Brian was a fire inspector for four years with Golden Gate National Recreation Area, ensuring fire and life safety code compliance in structures. Brian has over 25 years in structural fire experience and started his position as the Structural Fire Prevention Officer on January 12.

Photo: Brian Johnson.jpg

Branch of Aviation:

Kathy Komatz is joining NPS Aviation in Boise as part of the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), working toward a Masters of Education Technology from Boise State University. She has worked in Yosemite National Park for the past 23 years as a mule packer, ski instructor, backcountry ranger

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Bill Yohn



Mark Fitch



Brian Johnson



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and most recently a firefighter on the Yosemite Helitack crew. Kathy brings with her a great love of the national parks and enthusiasm for helicopters, fire, and teaching. Kathy began her position in Boise on March 16.



Kathy Komatz

Division of Fire and Aviation:

Landin Ballard comes to NPS as a student with ITT Technical Institute. After graduating from Meridian High School, Idaho, in 2005, Landin was deployed in summer 2006 to Ramadi and Fallujah with his battalion, 321 Combat Engineer. While there, his task force ran missions to find and destroy Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). Upon returning to the United States, Landin worked as an ambassador at a funeral home in Boise. He began his position in the Student Temporary Employment Program for Information Resources on January 18.

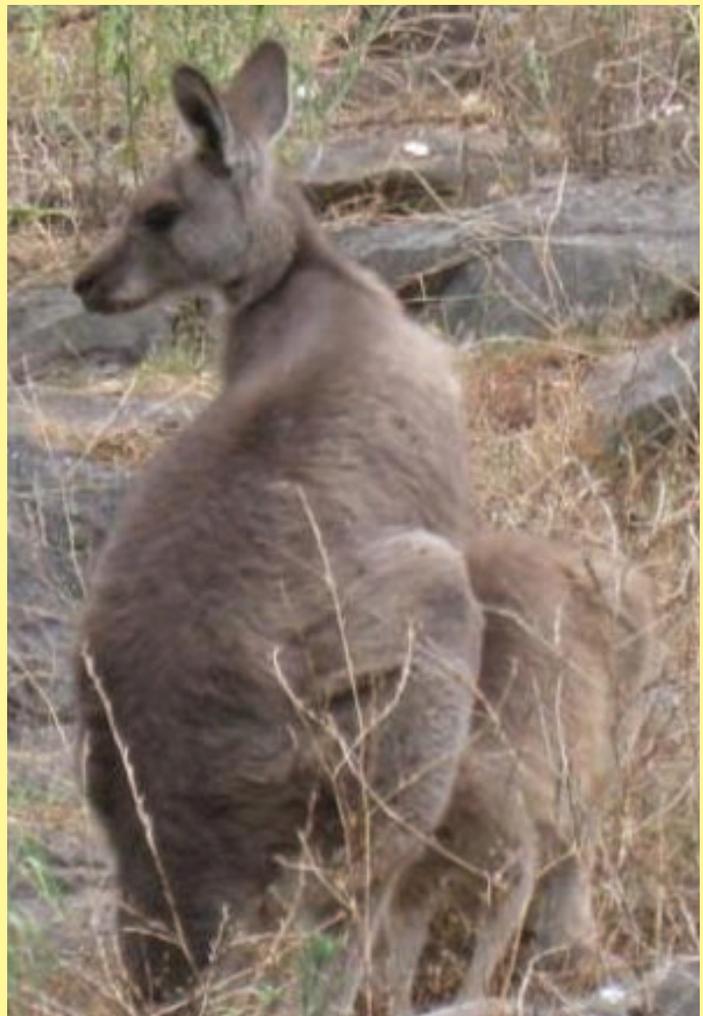


Landin Ballard

PHOTOS OF AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE



Koala found by BAER Team along Murrindindi River



Momma kangaroo with youngster near Churchill fire area.

