Smoke Signals
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C-Faller Program

~ Dave Koch, BIA~NIFC

Walt "Blacksnake" Lara (C-Certifier, Yurok Tribe) and Charlene Becenti (C-Faller, Navajo Interagency Hotshot Crew).

BIA-NIFC is sponsoring five C-Faller training courses this year. Three of these have been completed, including a session on the Yurok Reservation in Northern California, a session on the Menominee Reservation in North Central Wisconsin, and a session on the Blackfeet Reservation in Northwest Montana. The Yakama Tribe will be hosting

a course June 14th-16th and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai will be hosting a course in the fall.

The purpose of the C-Faller Training Program is to institutionalize safe felling practices throughout Indian Country. Handling chain saws continues to be one of the more risky aspects of firefighting and project work. In 2009, a "slow" fire season, there were 4 reported serious injuries and one fatality associated with hazard trees and felling operations.

Due to the risks associated with felling, there have been some recent changes to the qualification criteria for chain saw operators. Operators at all levels (FALA, FALB, or FALC) are now required to maintain arduous fitness, ironically something not required in the past. In addition, C-Fallers are now required to get

Charlene Becenti (Navajo IHC)

Yurok class

recertified every three years. These and other changes are explained in the 2010 Blue Book. The Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) was recently updated to include the new qualification criteria. This caused many previously qualified A, B, or C employees to lose red card qualifications. The C-Faller Committee believes these changes will result in improved technical ability of operators while maintaining a safe work environment in the woods.

The certification of FALC (Advanced Faller) is the highest level of proficiency. When an individual obtains this certification, they are considered able to work independently with limited direction and are qualified to fell the largest, most complex trees with diameters exceeding 36 inches DBH. They are also relied on to conduct S-212, Wildland Fire Chain Saws training and certify FALA and FALB level operators. The following Individuals obtained the FALC qualification so far this year:

Yurok Course:
Julius Hostetler, Geronimo IHC; Rickey Booqua Jr., Zuni IHC; Mario Dia, Geronimo IHC; Charlene Becenti, Navajo IHC; Erwin Goseyu, Geronimo IHC; Kenneth St. Marks, Ft. Peck Agency.

Chris Trombley

Menominee class

Menominee Course:
Gary E. Krueger II, Great Lakes Agency; Tony Frechette, Menominee Tribe; Charles Gauthier, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community.

Blackfeet Course:
Lyman Wolf Chief, Jr., Rocky Boys Agency; Kelly Stump, Rocky Boys Agency; Wes Spotted Eagle, Chief Mountain IHC; Leo D. Bullshoe, Jr., Blackfeet Tribe; Duane D. Kemmer, Chief Mountain IHC; Sheldon Carlson, Blackfeet Tribe.

Program Highlights:
Charlene Becenti (Navajo IHC whose photo is on the cover) became the first Native American woman to obtain the FALC qualification, based on our records. At the Yurok course, she demonstrated "surgical" precision in felling two large diameter, 150 foot Douglas-fir trees. Charlene a Navajo tribal member from Twin Lakes, NM, always enjoyed working outside. She grew up helping her father with outdoor chores like building fence and outbuildings, cutting firewood, and working with livestock. She enjoys rodeo and did some team roping. Charlene says "I don't really have any well established long term goals right now. I just want to do the best I can on the Shot crew. My goal was always to be a C-Faller and to be on the Saw Team, both of which I achieved this year." Charlene has been a firefighter since 2002 when she started with the Navajo Scouts. She has been with the Navajo IHC since 2006.


Charlene Becenti (Navajo IHC)


Blackfeet class

Chris Trombley (Wildland Fire Operations Specialist, Blackfeet Tribe) was certified as a C-Faller Certifier (CCRT) during the Blackfeet session. Chris becomes one of only eight C-Faller Certifiers nationally and only the second from the Blackfeet Tribe. The CCRT is the highest faller qualification recognized by the agency. Chris will be relied on to provide leadership, expert advice, and training support for the C-Faller Program.

Red Lake Reservation Rx Fire Program Protects Communities & Cultural Resources

~ Daria K. Day, Fire Prevention Education

Ponemah Crew ~ Photo by Greg Peterson - Red Lake Fire Crew

The fire season of 2003 was a record year for the Red Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota. An early spring and dry conditions led to over 450 fires that burned over 62,000 acres within the Reservation boundaries before April 15th. The spring of 2010 has been shaping up to be another record breaker with energy release components (ERC) in the 100th percentile and 1000-hour fuel moistures the lowest in 10 years for this date. As of April 15, 2010 approximately 63,000 acres have burned at Red Lake, but this year there is an important difference – 60,000 of those acres were burned as part of the Red Lake Prescribed Fire program.

The proactive program conducts prescribed burns to address everything from forest management to cultural burns to community protection. These actions have been helping to keep the fire numbers low, with fewer than half of the number in 2003 and only 3,000 acres burned. This article will explore the history of this progressive program and a few of the current projects that are benefiting the Red Lake Nation.

History

The Red Lake Reservation consists of 825,654 acres in northern Minnesota. The diminished reservation is 636,954 acres and other holdings, including the Northwest Angle which represents 156,900 acres. Red Lake itself represents the largest fresh water lake to lie entirely within one state and covers over 30,000 acres.

Before ~ Photo by Greg Peterson

The Red Lake Band still resides on aboriginal land and has lived in the area since the 1700's. Due to the foresight of Red Lake ancestors who refused to cede the diminished Reservation and resisted the Dawes Act, Red Lake was never allotted. This makes Red Lake unique in Indian Country in that all of the land is held in common by members of the Band.

The Red Lake Tribal Council has full sovereignty over the Reservation-subject only to the federal government. Red Lake is often referred to as a "closed" Reservation since it has the right to limit who can visit or live on the Reservation. The Red Lake Nation is exempt from Public Law 280 and the

During ~ Photo by Paul Maday

During ~ Photo by Greg Peterson

Tribal Council develops and enforces laws via a Tribal court system.

Red Lake has a history of leadership in many areas. It was the first Tribe in the country to have tribal automobile license plates, they elected the first Indian County Commissioner in the State and built an archives-library program to preserve Tribal records and historic materials. In addition, Red Lake was the first Reservation in the country to develop a Wildfire Prevention Plan that funded full and part-time permanent fire prevention positions.

History of Fire Use

Red Lake has a cultural history that has always included the use of fire. A study conducted in the mid-1900's indicated that during the period from 1909 to 1930 the Reservation had experienced regular fires on the landscape, including a fire in 1910 that burned approximately 25 percent of the standing timber at that time.

Historically, fire activity was due to two major causes. Settlers to the area would set land clearing fires that were allowed to burn onto the Reservation from surrounding areas. Human caused fires also originated around the villages of Red Lake and Redby. The people of Red Lake utilized fire for more than cooking and heat. They also used it to control and manipulate the natural environment. Prescribed fire was used to improve blueberry harvests and burn off vegetation in yards. But significant fire use always carries the risk of escaped fires.

In 1946, to help protect the communities and resources, the Red Lake Tribal Council passed an ordinance requiring all able bodied men between ages 18 and 55 to assist in fighting fires. Those that refused faced a $10 fine and/or 10 days in jail. An arson ordinance was also developed with a penalty of $60 or 60 days in jail. In a continued attempt to moderate the risk from escaped fires a burn permitting system was developed in 1948 that required a permit for any fire other than domestic.

Red Lake Prescribed Fire Program

The historical comfort with, and use of fire by the people of Red Lake has had both advantages and challenges as the Red Lake Wildland Fire program has developed. The young men and women of the community continue to be the primary contributors to fire suppression crews. Their understanding of fire provides the community with capable protectors. But that same historical comfort with fire use has sometimes resulted in threats to the safety of the community and cultural resources through human caused fires.

Highway 1 Rx Pattern ~ Photo by Bruce Jourdain

The Red Lake Wildland Fire program has been using prescribed fire as a tool for community protection and resource management since 1997. In 2000 the National Fire Plan provided funding for a Prescribed Fire and Fuels Manager (aka Fuels Specialist). This position has allowed the program to grow quickly into the progressive organization you see today. The Red Lake Prescribed Fire program burns over 70,000 acres each year with projects that include community protection burns around community areas that remove available fuels and prevent wildfires from threatening lives and homes. Removing these fuels has also led to a reduction in the number and size of fires.

Other burns are conducted in order to provide a buffer along the Reservation boundary and remove hazardous fuels to prevent large unwanted, late-season fires from damaging timber resources.

In addition to community protection Red Lake is engaging in cutting edge pine regeneration projects. Research being done on these burns will help them

During ~ Photo by Bruce Jourdain

Red Dragon **~ Photo by Paul Maday**

to better utilize fire as a tool to help reestablish pine. Carefully conducted underburns are being used to prepare seed beds for natural pine regeneration. These underburns also reduce the likelihood that an unwanted fire would cause significant damage to the timber that provides current and future income for the Tribe.

Case Studies

To further understand this unique program it is important to review several of the important burns conducted at Red Lake each year. The following are three case studies:

Project #1 Ponemah Pines

Goals and Objectives: Red pine, like many other pines, is fire dependent. While the cones do not have the serotinous (waxy) coating that jack pine do, red pine seedlings become established after fires when competitive vegetation, such as hazel, has been removed and a seed bed has been prepared. In 1997 the Red Lake Department of Natural Resources (DNR) decided to manage the red pine stands in Ponemah using mechanical treatment and low to moderate intensity prescribed fire to mimic the conditions that would lead to natural regeneration. As noted by Joseph Harris, Red Lake Prescribed Fire and Fuels Manager for the Red Lake DNR, "The Ponemah site is quite rare for Minnesota in its almost pure composition of red pine as the dominant species in the canopy, the large acreage of entirely natural origination, and its contiguousness and continuity. " These stands are 95 to 118 years old.

The Tribe's programmatic prescribed fire plan and sylvicultural prescription were used to identify the following resource and prescribed fire objectives:

- Reduce the duff layer and expose mineral soil to prepare a seed bed.
- Maintain a burn interval that would control the hazel and other competitive brush species.
- Maintain enough heat on the stems of the undesired, competitive vegetation to girdle and eventually kill 80%.
- Burn the areas with enough intensity to kill 80% or more of the hazardous fuels that could threaten the plantation in the event of an unwanted fire.
- Reduce the number of mature hardwood trees and discourage new growth.
- Protect the pine by utilizing a low intensity burn that limits mortality to 10% or less.

Data is being collected from these burns each year to study the effects of conducting prescribed fires during the red pines dormant season (spring) versus the growing season (summer).

Dates: This burn has been conducted during spring and summer with differing results based on the intensity of the burns. There are several burn units that are being treated differently to compare results.

The first unit was burned as early as 1986. While there was no formal burn plan at that time the Tribe recognized the need to regenerate this unique resource and protect it from unwanted fires. The following years saw a great deal of change in organization and leadership on the Reservation. No repeated burning was done until 1997. Unit 1 is the only one that has been burned in the spring, usually mid to late May. Hazel is top killed, but within 5 years it is back to where it was. Unit 1 has been burned five times (1986, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2009).

Acres: Approximately 1,455 acres Tools and Techniques: Units are "mowed" before prescribed fire is applied to bring the hazel down to ground level and provide for air circulation, drying, and increased availability of summer "windows" for burning.

Ignition is conducted by hand which allows the lighters to closely monitor the intensity of the prescribed fire. The intensity can be moderated by varying the width between the strips of fire they lay down. When strips are closer together the fire intensity will be lower, thus protecting the pine, but still accomplishing the goal of killing the competing vegetation and preparing seed beds. Wider spacing between the strips will increase fire intensity which burns deeper into the duff and in mid-summer could cause damage to the trees.

Results:

- Mowing increases the prescribed fire windows (mowing can be done anytime of the year)
- Higher risk of mortality with summer burning. White pine have a higher mortality rate than red pine
- Summer burning is decreasing the hazel stems and increasing duff consumption
- Higher cost with summer vs. spring burns (i.e. additional time, more resources, additional mop-up etc.) are offset by fewer burns needed to achieve the management objectives
- Good pine regeneration in summer burn units
- Patience is needed in summer burning as the ignition crews must closely monitor the fire intensity and often take more time to lay down narrow strips of fire.


During **~ Photo by Paul Maday**

After ~ Photo by Greg Peterson

Project #2 Highway 1 Burn

Goals and Objectives: Once again the Red Lake Reservation was far ahead of its time. Starting in 1999 the DNR started conducting burns along the north and west boundaries of the Reservation. The original burn plan was for 12,700 acres. The goal of this project is to reduce hazardous fuels by 80% in order to prevent large, unwanted, late season wildfires from damaging timber resources and from coming onto or burning off of the Reservation.

Dates: This burn is always conducted in early spring when holding lines and natural barriers are most effective for preventing prescribed fire escapes. These barriers allow the burns to be conducted using a small number of firefighters and in a compressed timeframe. A rarkable 60,000 to 70,000 acres are often completed in just 4 – 5 days.

Acres: If 100% of units are burned the total would be approximately 70,000 acres. 36,000 acres were burned in 2008; 68,000 in 2009; and 60,000 in 2010

Tools and Techniques: The units within this burn are very large and require a different approach to ignition. The control lines are put in using a Ranger with an ATV torch to create areas that are free of vegetation and serve as control lines. Approximately 15,000 acres are burned using this technique.

The remainder of the burn is currently conducted using aerial ignition. Red Lake uses their exclusive use helicopter and partners with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, with whom it shares a plastic sphere dispenser. Currently the MN DNR provides the plastic sphere dispenser operators to conduct the burn. The Red Lake prescribed fire program is developing their internal resources in the hopes of being self-sufficient for this burn in the near future. In 2010, Red Lake purchased the Red Dragon plastic sphere dispenser manufactured by SEI Industries of Canada. Red Lake currently has three trainees who will soon be able to conduct the firing operation in house.

This prescribed fire has been very effective at reducing the large acre fires that have historically threatened the timber resources of the Tribe. While these burns are conducted using minimal human resources, they do use a lot of "ping pong balls". During the 2009 burn, Red Lake DNR used approximately 45,000 plastic spheres to complete the 68,000 acre project.

Project #3 Community Protection

Goals and Objectives: These burns are conducted to remove hazardous fuels within the community areas to prevent human caused fires.

Dates: These prescribed fires have been conducted in early spring for over 30 years.

Acres: This project consists of over 30 low complexity burns throughout the community area.

Tools and Techniques: The majority of the Red Lake fire staff has completed training as Prescribed Fire Boss Type 3 (RXB3). This qualification allows the staff to complete these low complexity burns quickly and efficiently. The burn ignition is completed by hand. The result of these burns has been a reduction in unwanted fires that directly threaten the high density community areas.

Conclusion

Prescribed fire has long been a tool of the people of Red Lake, whether it was used to create habitat that encouraged the growth of medicinal plants or blueberries or to remove winter killed vegetation. That tradition of fire use continues today with the projects explored in this article. Not only is this program completing large and complex prescribed fires, but they are completing them safely and in a compressed timeframe (often just a few weeks in the spring of each year). The establishment of a formalized program has allowed funding to support this innovative program and is encouraging the development and training of the prescribed fire and fuels managers who will continue to serve and protect Indian Country into the future.

Fuels Reduction Projects on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska

~ Laura Atkins & Charlie Sink

The Alaska Region of the Bureau of Indian Affairs has distributed funds to Chugachmiut Tribal Consortium (made up of Chugach Region Tribes) for the completion of hazardous fuel removal treatments. Chugachmiut is created to provide self-determination to the seven

Orientation for the Yukon crew at Chugachmiut.

Native communities of the Chugach region.

Funding for the project made it possible for the hiring of three crews, or approximately forty-five crew members: the Denali fire crew, Yukon crew, and the Chugachmiut Forest Crew. In addition, a new seasonal position at Chugachmiut, a fire/fuels specialist has been created to assist in the planning aspects of the fire/fuels program.

Planned for the Denali and Yukon crew is the treatment of Native allotment land around Soldotna and Homer. Treatments will include: thinning, piling, and chipping. The woodchips created will be utilized for biomass, hopefully to be a potential heat source for the Native communities the chips are harvested from.

Sites selected for treatment will be identified by reviewing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, or CWPP's, and the communities identified as "high-risk" will be the number one priority for a fuels removal treatment.

The Chugachmiut Forest Crew, consisting of six individuals mainly from Nanwalek, Alaska will conduct individual FireWise homesite treatments for Tribal elders and others on the Kenai Peninsula.

The project funding has provided highly needed jobs, fuels reduction treatments to Native allotment land owners, the renting of an American made chipper and also meaningful training to crew members. The crew members will be offered training that includes: basic wildland fire fighting training certification (S-130, S-190, I-100, & L-180), FireWise techniques and wildland fire chain saw safety (S-212). This training and experience will provide crew members with the knowledge and capability to give back to native communities in the future by training those who wish to participate in hazardous fuel removals.

FEMO and FOBS in Florida S-244 Class

~ Laura Atkins, Fire/Fuels Specialist, Chugachmiut, Inc.

First day of class - mapping

For the past three years, fire and fuels managers at NIFC have had an increasing interest in getting additional qualified FEMOs (Fire Effects Monitors) into the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This process began with a BIA sponsored interagency FEMO workshop on the San Carlos Reservation back in April of 2008. In April of 2009, the BIA sponsored another FEMO workshop on the Colville Reservation, also attracting the Interagency Fire community.

By January 2010, the BIA was able to put on an NWCG endorsed S-244 FEMO/FOBS course. The Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge (US Fish and Wildlife Service) hosted the event. The refuge was established in 1989 under the Endangered Species Act to protect the endangered Florida Panther (which is the only cougar species found east of the Mississippi River). The refuge is comprised of 26,400 acres of land and home to many species of animals including bobcats, black bear, fox, coyotes, and alligators. There are approximately 80-100 adult panthers that remain in the wild with most of the population located in South Florida, and a sighting of these illusive creatures is very rare.

The class included recently developed video sections of the course, made possible by the group NIFTT (National Interagency Fuels, Fire, and Vegetation Technology Transfer). Heather Heward, a graduate student from the University of Idaho contributes to this group, and

Lighting

FEMO-FOBS Students and Instructors

has played a key role in getting the S-244 course online. The S-244 class in Florida offered a chance for the video component to be evaluated by the students.

The S-244 course began on Tuesday, January 26th, 2010 at the Fish and Wildlife's office in Naples, FL. Students spent the morning learning the roles and responsibilities of a FEMO and FOBS which included how to assemble a FEMO kit, apply the ICS, role of a FOBS and a FEMO on an incident, how to communicate to supervisors, and how to conduct monitoring and observation operations according to standards. Next students were exposed to the new video component of the course, the topic being policy and planning. This policy relates to the elements of monitoring which are required by the Interagency Prescribed Fire Implementation Plan and are the rationale for monitoring on a wildfire. The planning section included elements of describing the relationship between strategic objectives from Land Management, Resource Management and/or Fire Management Plans and the incident/project objectives. The relationship between management objectives and monitoring protocols was described. After this video component, another video segment was played, this time on reports and summaries of the FEMO and FOBS.

The monitoring summary for a FEMO or FOBS includes documented observations on weather, fire behavior, smoke production, and fire effects. The comparison of predicted fire behavior, fire effects, and weather observed should also be included. A FEMO or FOBS should be able to describe in narrative format how closely wildland fire management objectives were met and be able to document follow-up actions as needed.

On the second day of the course, students spent the morning in the classroom learning about fuel moisture sampling and fire effects on vegetation. During the afternoon, students were able to observe a live-fire exercise on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, located 20 miles east of Naples, Florida. Utilizing the available fire staff on the refuge, firefighters and class instructors lit a portion of fuels located

along the side of a lake. Students were instructed to take down any data they observed while the fire was burning. This observation allowed students to become familiar with the roles of FEMO/FOBS on a wildfire or prescribed fire event. Next, students broke into small groups and visited different "stations" where a member of the cadre demonstrated a specific task FEMOs and FOBS frequently perform on an incident. Stations included demonstrations on fuel moisture sampling, plot transects, calculating probability of ignition, and other important tasks. After the exercises were completed, students were asked to share their fire observations and experiences with the exercises with the rest of the class.

On Thursday, the final day of the course, students were shuttled back to the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. Thanks to the Florida Panther Fire Management Officer, Kim Ermstrom, a prescribed fire was implemented for the students to observe. Three tracts of land were available to burn as time and conditions allowed. After the test fire proved successful for fuel consumption and smoke dispersion, igniters assumed their roles and set to motion the burn pattern. The portion of the refuge in which the burn took place consists of prairie grasses, south Florida slash pine, scattered saw palmetto, and

cabbage palm. Because prescribed fire is one tool the refuge utilizes in order to improve, restore, and maintain optimal conditions for the panther and other plants and animals that are dependent on healthy native habitats, it is crucial to recognize when conditions are favorable for this type of management to take place. The students were not asked to take part in the actual physical burning of the unit, but were tasked with taking down observations. This was seen as students took pictures, measurements, performed rates of spread calculations, communicated with other students and the cadre, and took notes during the burn. After the prescribed fire, an AAR took place giving students and cadre a chance to share experiences of the burn. The key role of a FEMO/FOBS as someone who takes observations of the burn was reiterated and challenges associated with those roles was discussed.

Kim Ernstrom, Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, FMO

There were many successes that occurred because of this course. For one, this was the first time NWCG had endorsed the FEMO version of the course. Secondly, the interagency community that came together to participate and teach the course was outstanding. From the cadre, there were folks from the BIA, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Rocky Mountain Research Station, the National Park Service, and the National Interagency Fire Center. Students came from: the BIA, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, a number of tribes, the National Park Service, and the University of Idaho. Having just taken over their fire program from the BIA, fire managers from the Seminole Tribe Fire Rescue had four students taking the course. The Seminole Reservation is located northeast of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, and this training allowed Refuge and Reservation fire managers to collaborate. This class was also tied to the BIA Mentoring program, with six students continuing their training with three weeks of prescribed burning at Seminole. Finally, this training course gave everyone involved a chance to experience a different type of fire environment and the opportunity to begin to understand the importance of fire management. Many tasks within the FEMO/FOBS taskbook were completed because of this experience, and those that were involved will be able to share their knowledge in future fire endeavors. Thanks to the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge for sponsoring this event, it was a huge success!

Operations

In the Spotlight! Mescalero Welcomes New Fire Operations Chief!

Chief Ray Ruiz, Sr. has recently accepted a position with the Mescalero Apache Tribe's Division of Resource Management & Protection (DRMP) as their Chief of Fire Operations. Chief Ruiz, formerly with the Sycuan Fire Department Air & Wildland division, brings many years of expertise and a passion for Native American and Indigenous People's fire, fuels and aviation programs. The Mescalero Apache Tribe will certainly derive benefit from Chief Ruiz's ability for visionary thinking, his discipline, and his ability to make good things happen.

During his tenure at Sycuan and along with now retired Chief Henry "Hank" Murphy, Chief Ruiz established the only BIA Nationally (NIFC) funded Type 1 crew in the state of California, the "Golden Eagles Hotshots." After the Golden Eagles Hotshots were established, the Golden Eagles Flycrew 1 and the Golden Eagles Fuels Modification Crew, the first government to government (Tribal and City) Type 1 crews were established. They work together with the City of San Diego Fire & Rescue Department and the San Diego City Parks and Recreation Department.

These programs provide needed career opportunities for Native American, Indigenous People, and non-native peoples alike. These programs are giving youth the proper tools, guidance, and discipline to succeed in their careers and in life. The program promotes and expects these youth to value integrity, honor and respect. The program provides education and experience so these young people can go back to their Tribes and contribute to their programs in their own communities. This opportunity also helps to bridge the gap with Native American and Indigenous people across the border in Baja, California as well as in places such as La Huerta, Ojos Negros and Laguna Hudson and with the Ensenada Fire Department. In his book, "Native Men of Courage", Vincent Schilling writes of Chief Ruiz,

"His experiences as a young man have enabled him to serve as an effective teacher, mentor, and father figure for the crew of the Golden Eagles Hotshots."

The Mescalero Apache Tribe brought Chief Ruiz on board to restructure the fire program and strengthen the fuels program so the tribe could improve their fuels mitigation endeavors. Thora Padilla, Program Manager for DRMP, saw the need for the tribe to restructure their prescribed fire program and asked Chief Ruiz to ensure there are qualified prescribed fire personnel within the tribe with the skills to conduct their own prescribed fire operations. The goal of DRMP is to revive the Mescalero Apache tradition of fuels management through prescribed fire, a legendary tribal skill. "The Mescalero Apache are known for being fire warriors." said Chief Ruiz. He went on to say, "After we conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects, we plan to come back in the winter and conduct prescribed fire applications in those areas." He said, "The vision of the DRMP is to develop the younger people so they can eventually take over the program. I anticipate they will do the same for those coming up behind them."

Chief Ray Ruiz, Sr. in Mescalero

Chief Ruiz is also developing a Type 2 IA crew from within the ranks of the Mescalero Apache fuels personnel. Chief Ruiz is accustomed to "making a difference" in Indian Country and we expect to see good things happening in the Mescalero Apache Tribe Division of Resource Management and Protection. Congratulations on your new appointment Chief Ruiz and we wish you and the Tribe a happy, productive and successful program!

If you have someone you'd like to Spotlight due to the great work they are doing in or for Indian Country, please contact either Dave Koch or Laurel Simos (see back page of Smoke Signals for contact information) with your article or your idea.

BIA Model 52 Standardization Project

~ Laurel Simos, BIA~NIFC

Back row, l to r: Dulce M-52; Eagle Butte M-52; Missoula M-52.
Front row l to r: Edwin "Joe" Alonzo, Leroy Nez, Dennis Zentz, Roberta Steele Elvis Handboy, Diana Charles, Basil Tanner, Bernadette Lucero, Chester Gladstone, Adam Wolf, David Morsette.

Model 52 Standardization…

The Model 52 Wildland Fire Engine Program Managers have been tasked with standardizing the BIA Model 52 Type 6 engine. The three options for evaluation are due to the quality of the engines developed at each respective BIA Model 52 Service Center; the Eagle Butte Center, the Missoula Center and the Dulce Center have been the options for evaluation.

Each center presented their existing model and what configuration and features had been incorporated into each engine. Then began the difficult process of deciding which type of configuration would suit everyone, provide the most optimal service, be the most efficient, and be the most economical.

The group reviewed all aspects of each Model 52 wildland fire truck. They had "hands on" sessions where they were able to ask questions, review the specifications of each of the components used to build the engines. Basic components were agreed upon and the group was also able to incorporate some new ideas. Dennis Zentz, Center Manager in Dulce said, "The first step of standardization was to agree."

Standardization has multiple challenges and benefits which include cost savings, efficiency, and availability of parts and components. Standardization will provide a direct matchup for replacement parts. An added benefit is safety. Fewer things can go wrong when everyone who is approved to do repairs or replace components is familiar with the parts.

The current Model 52 engines are white Ford F-550 Extended cab 4 X 4's. The Model 52 program will focus on rebuilding/refurbishing the existing Model 52's to current specifications. Then, as these engines and components reach the end of their lifecycles, the new specifications will be fully implemented.

The next step in this process is to agree to the plumbing configuration, type of and location of fixtures, durability and ease of replacing and repairing parts, and to identify potential safety issues. After the completion of this phase the group will address configuration and assembly standards. They will also determine what colors to use on the toolboxes. The colors are a very important aspect of the standardization process as the colors will, for a long time to come, identify these engines as Bureau of Indian Affairs engines.

After FY10, all replacement engines will be built to the standards this group has developed. The new engine standards will slowly be integrated during the truck and/or pump replacement phase.

The group met with Dennis Marglin and Susan Zirkle, "DC BIA Property" where they learned how process property transfers, and order and track vehicles.

"We are designing and developing our own standardized engine that is optimally functional, can be repaired quickly and easily, and is professional looking. The BIA Model 52 engine is being designed by the people who have used them and design considerations by people who are currently using them. Prior to the Model 52 Program, many BIA engines were 'hobbled together'. Now, we are creating a functional and professional fleet of quality fire engines!" said Dennis Zentz.

Chet Gladstone, Missoula Center Manager said, "the standardization process is challenging because each of the centers has produced a Model 52 vehicle with a lot of merit, and in order to make this successful, a lot of compromises are having to be made. The Model 52 personnel are working hard to design the best vehicle possible for Indian Country."

Eagle Butte Center Manager, Elvis Handboy said, "Standardization has been in the works for a long time, but we got things rolling real well during 2009 and 2010. We've standardized the F-550 Ford flatbed, the boxes, rack, 300 gallon tanks, and the reel. Now we're working on the plumbing system. We're designing the plumbing as simply and streamlined as possible so the trained user will be able to fix anything that goes wrong."

Model 52 Program Welcomes Chet Gladstone

~ Chet Gladstone, NIFC Model 52 Program Center Manager

Chet Gladstone on a recent trip to Boise

Chet Gladstone, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe in Montana was born and raised in Seattle Washington. In 1991, he received a B.S. degree in Forest Resources Management from the University of Montana.

Chet accepted a timber presale position on the Rocky Boys' Reservation and in 1992, he accepted a timber sale administration forester position on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

In 1996, a Reduction-in-Force abolished the presale forester position. Soon the Forest Manager and FMO transferred leaving Chet as the only forester left. Chet accepted the Forest Manager position, and working with the forestry technicians, prepared and sold enough timber sales to satisfy the annual ten million board feet timber harvest commitment.

In 2002, he accepted the Forest Manager position on the Blackfeet Reservation. The timber sale program consisted of one technician.

In July of that year, the Fox Creek Fire burned 22 million board feet of timber. They set aside timber sales for the Blackfeet Loggers and bid the remaining burnt timber on the open market. The salvage sale captured $3 million for the tribe.

In 2006, the Red Eagle Fire burned 30 million board feet of Blackfeet timber. At that time, the timber sale program consisted of one presale forester. The timber revenue from that salvage sale was $4 million. After that, timber sales slowed and Chet accepted the center manager position for NIFC's Model 52 Program in Missoula, Montana.

Prevention

Earth Day in the Little Rockies

~ Rick Weasel, Fire Prevention Specialist, Fort Belknap Fire Management
~ David Peters, Interface/Prevention Specialist, NIFC

Fort Belknap Fire Management program participated with various other agencies, teaching children from kindergarten through sixth grade about Earth Day. The event was held at Wilson Park, within the Little Rocky Mountains, in north central Montana. One of the highlights of the fire program's outreach was a character appearance of Smokey Bear. A fire education discussion from the tribe's prevention lead was also done for the people that attended the event. Over three hundred students attended the education event. Harlem, Hayes and Lodgepole elementary schools were the three schools involved in the Earth Day activities. Fire management was involved in the outreach event along with: fish and game, water quality, environmental protection, health services, law enforcement, extension service and the BIA land department. Numerous program agency directors spoke at the Mission Canyon Powwow grounds at the fourteenth annual Earth Day event.

Smokey at Powwow grounds

In the Mission Canyon recreation area the fire management staff completed a 120 acre forest thinning project to reduce the hazardous fuels, since this is a high use area. Campfires was one of the major human causes of fire on the reservation when the prevention program started, but now fire use, children and equipment are the major causes. Approximately four thousand people, mostly tribal member, use this area/year. The recreation area is adjacent to BLM lands as well.

Tree thinning

Team North Dakota Fire Education Efforts

~ Team North Dakota ~ 2010

Kids at the Bullarama in St. John, ND

Team North Dakota 2010 - Jim Hamley, Curtiss Matt, James DeCoteau, David Peters and Bruce Running Crane

Fire season started early in Indian Country in North Dakota this year. Three of North Dakota's Indian Reservations (Fort Totten, Turtle Mountain and Fort Berthold) have already recorded over

130 human caused wildfire starts in March and April. As a result of these fire starts, an intertribal fire prevention and education team was mobilized to assist them with their wildfire concerns.

The goal of the prevention team was to educate area residents on fire safety, as well as to provide an ecological and historical background on Native American fire use prior to European contact. The Blackfeet (Pi-kun-ni) "fire carrier" custom was shared with students during team lectures. This technique was used by Native Americans to transport fires from camp to camp, prior to the invention of modern ignition devices.

Bruce Running Crane Teaching the "fire carrier" presentation.

During the team assignment, the new North and South Dakota fire education trailer was fully equipped and supplied, so it could be used in communities. This trailer will be used in the Dakota's for fire education outreach efforts, such as: pow wows, fairs, school and civic events, as well as prescribed fire and wildfire incidents. The trailer is now equipped to show fire education videos on a 26 inch flat screen TV and to hand out fire education literature and Smokey Bear materials.

Curtiss Matt teaching 4th graders at Ojibwa school in Belcourt, ND.

The team also employed other teaching strategies such as: We-Tip, which is a national prevention organization that provides monetary rewards for information regarding fire arson. We-Tip information was developed and distributed in Indian Country by TV, newspaper and radio media.

Other fire awareness issues discussed by the team were: Firewise, fire ecology, as well as Smokey Bear prevention messages. Smokey Bear signs were also made available to head start, elementary, secondary and college learning institutes to help reservations mitigate unwanted fires.

Sheldon Sankey CMYK demonstrating How to clean a rain gutter for film crew.

~ Photo by Jonas Manley

Protecting your Home from Wildfire

~ Sheldon Sankey, Fuels Technician, Eastern Oklahoma Region

In most parts of the Country, when fires are moving through the timber or pine stands home owners are evacuated in a short time. In the Grasslands the time available to leave your home is even shorter. Grass fuels run mostly from short to tall. High winds push fires through mowed short grass as if it were soaked in gasoline. The smallest ember in brush has a chance to ignite a home.

As firefighters we do our best to suppress the wildfires before loss of homes occur. Many of us have seen the destruction caused by wildfires. In some instances we question ourselves as to why one house survived and another didn't.

I have had the opportunity to work with different tribes and Agencies in Indian Country. My early stints were primarily on Type II handcrews. As I progressed to Wildland Engine support, my perspective changed quite a bit in terms of structure protection.

The "Protecting Your Home from Wildfire" is a Do-it-Yourself (DIY) video. It provides information so residents will know what to do to protect their home.

The concept began a few years ago, but didn't gain momentum until April 9, 2009. That year, over 150 homes were lost in mid-central Oklahoma (http://newsok.com/firestorm/). At that time, tactics changed from fighting fires

Blacksnake's Corner

~ Walt Lara - Yurok Forestry

Walt did not have an article for this issue of Smoke Signals. He said, "The salmon are running so Blacksnake will be back next issue."

to protecting as many structures as possible. In most cases there were more homes than fire resources.

During the dry season, home protection should be an all out effort in order to protect residents before the wildfires start. Residents can proactively protect their homes, then, when there is a wildfire, fire personnel can focus their efforts on tactics and strategy. Firefighters are less likely to put themselves in danger knowing homes can withstand the onslaught of a wildfire.

Thanks goes to Linda Hull for the use of her home during the filming. A thank you is also given to Traile G. Glory, Superintendent, Chickasaw Agency, Pat McDowell, Prevention Specialist and Sam Scranton, Deputy Fire Use and Fuels Specialist for their support with the project. The project could not have been completed were it not for my colleagues (co-stars), Tommy Schultz, Prevention Tech and Jonas Manley, Range Tech. The Chickasaw Nation Multimedia is to be commended for an excellent job in producing the video for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Every firefighter has another tool to educate their family and friends on what they can do to protect Homes from wildfire. To obtain copies of the video please do not hesitate to call William "Tommy" Schultz, Prevention Tech, Chickasaw Agency at (580) 436-0784.

Sheldon Sankey CMYK and Tommy Schultz being filmed for video.
~ Photo by Jonas Manley

Training

More M-410 Success

~ Dave Koch ~ BIA/NIFC

Leon Ben, Jr. Lead Instructor for M-410

Leon Ben, Western Region Fire Management Officer led a cadre of instructors during the delivery of M-410, Facilitative Instructor at the Arizona Wildfire and Incident Management Academy in Prescott, Arizona March 15th -19th. The Academy is one of the biggest in the country with the 2010 venue hosting over 700 students from 20 states, and offering 40 courses from S-130/190 to several 400 level courses.

Duane Tewa, Instructor

This was Leon's first delivery as lead instructor. He was supported by Duane Tewa, Andrea Gilham, Guy Acuna, and Dave Koch. The purpose of the class is to provide training for potential instructors of NWCG courses. The class focuses on enhancing facilitation and communication skills, and improving self confidence when delivering presentations.

Becoming qualified as an M-410 lead instructor is no easy task. Leon has supported the course for several years as a Unit instructor and was recently certified to lead the course. Leon, a San Carlos Apache tribal member, delivered a polished, high quality course. Students were impressed that Leon could create a learning environment that made them feel so "at ease" when it came to delivering the three required presentations. Said Andrea Gilham; "Leon is a natural. He has a way of connecting with people that you don't see very often. This is really an important quality to have as an instructor, and particularly for this course.".

M-410, Facilitative Instructor is offered every year on the second week of January. The 2011 course will be held once again at the Catamaran in San Diego.

Thanks!

Thanks again to those of you who have submitted articles and photographs. Keep up the great work!

Submission Criteria

Please include the author's name, title and location, captions and high resolution photographs attached as separate jpeg files. The article submission deadline for "Smoke Signals" is as follows:

March 1
June 1
September 1
December 1

Please start submitting articles for the next issue of Smoke Signals as soon as you can! Thank you!

"If a man does his best, what else is there?" ~ General George S. Patton (1885-1945)

Distribution

Please route this publication to your staff as well as to your EFFers. If you need additional copies for your staff, or need copies sent to an another address please contact us. Please make sure your seasonal fire employees have an opportunity to read Smoke Signals!

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Thank you!

If you don't see your article in this issue of Smoke Signals, you should see it in the next. Thanks again for the high quality articles and excellent response!

Article Submission Checklist

- ☐ Author's name
- ☐ Author's title
- ☐ Author's agency/location
- ☐ High resolution jpg photos
- ☐ Photo captions
- ☐ Names of people in photo and where they work
- ☐ Contact name, number, and email address