

2016



From the Peaks to the Prairies

NRCG Prevention and Education Committee

Prevention and Education Committee Highlights

Across the Northern Rockies Geographical Area, an abundance of wildfire prevention, educational activities and fuel mitigation took place in 2016. The following pages will give you but a small sample of activities by zone.

We look forward to adding members to complement the committee, as various slots for representation are currently vacant.

The NRCG hosted a remote version of the P-310 (Prevention Team Member) class this spring in Bozeman. The class was well attended. There were struggles with coordinating a virtual class that was taught in Boise, but overall the participants thought it went well. It was suggested that the remote facilitators to do more

teaching, making the class more interactive and meaningful. By teaching virtually there was no need for an entire cadre at each remote site. More students could be reached.

Prevention Education committee members tried to hold a remote site to join the Great Basin Prevention and Education Conference, but there was little interest in virtual attendance. The Northern Rockies understand the importance of personal interaction at a gathering such as these. Maybe various presenta-

tions could have been posted to Youtube so people could watch from anywhere.



In 2016 the committee continued their utilization of the "One Less Spark" campaign that was started last year. It has been useful for the zones to have materials readily available for their use.

Looking Ahead To 2017

The Fire Prevention & Education committee held two meetings in 2016 that were constructive and valuable in positioning us for success in 2017.

At the fall meeting, zone restrictions and closures training was identified as a need and priority for 2017.

Two main points identified by the committee include:
 (1) it is important to first prioritize and expand existing prevention efforts prior to implementing restrictions
 (2) in some situations, it may be best for a specific agency to go into restrictions and not the entire zone (all agencies) due to weather condition and numbers

of human starts, as well as multiple agency nuances that are difficult to coordinate. The committee will work on identifying which zones are interested in restriction and closure training and make it readily available.

The committee adopted a tracking mechanism to capture prevention and education efforts across our geographic area. This online form not only captures our impacts but also categorizes and aligns them to key messages from the national cohesive wildland fire management strategy. The goal of summarizing this information is to demonstrate the importance of fire education, prevention, outreach and community preparedness, which drives

the importance of building and maintaining local program capacity, funding and staffing. Not all activities are reported on the form, since not all entities use it as their reporting mechanism. Please contact me if you would like to utilize this information.

Committee participation and representation from the zones and agencies is increasing, but there are still a few vacant slots. Thank you to everyone for their commitment.

Crystal Beckman-MT DNRC
 Current NRCG Prev.& Ed
 Committee Chair

Central Zone Highlights

Fire Prevention Social Media Blitz

By Terina Goicoechea

Partners and cooperators in the Central Zone of the NRCG continued the One Less Spark Campaign. They opted for an electronic push this fire season, with a social media “blitz” of fire prevention messages and the dissemination of various content-related news releases and other traditional media outreach.

Recent research shows that successful prevention requires participation by everyone including communities, individuals, government agencies, groups, and private initiatives. Research also

shows that the effort you invest in pre-



vention activities does pay off in the end. The intent of the campaign was to reduce the number of human-caused fires by delivering a central message and increasing awareness of the effects of wildfire. The desired result was noticeable positive actions due to a

changed behavior, where individuals take personal responsibility to reduce the risks and effects of wildfire and understand how not to start one in the first place. This, in turn, prevented agencies and organizations from having to implement fire restrictions and closure to further limit human ignitions. Not one restrictions area in the Central Zone implemented widespread restrictions this season.

All messages and posts were easily utilized across agency and ownership boundaries. All were easily recognizable by the OLS logo and/or the hashtag #OneLessSpark. The key messages addressed the most common cause categories identified by partners in the zone.

Northwestern Zone Highlights

Grant Helps Fund Mitigation Work At the Alvord Lake Community Forest by Lisa Osborn

The Montana Conservation Crew thinned a 20 acre area the summer of 2016 under the guidance of the Lincoln County Forester. A grant that was financed through the MT DNRC and prepared and administered by the Libby Society of American Foresters (SAF), the Lincoln County Forester and the Lincoln County FferSafe Council was used to provide mitigation at the Alvord Lake Community Forest near Troy, MT.

The Alvord Lake Community Forest conservation deal was created after a 12-year, community-led effort brokered by the Vital Ground Foundation, a nonprofit land trust based in Missoula, MT. The nonprofit purchased a 142-acre forested parcel on the east shore of the lake. The southeast lakeshore provides important fish and wildlife habitat, along with numerous recreational opportunities for the local Troy community. The parcel is bounded by Kootenai National Forest to the west and Stimson Lumber Company



Lincoln County Forester explains the 20 acre thinning project the the MCC Crew accomplished on the Alvord Lak Community Forest.

lands that are part of the Kootenai Valleys conservation easement to the north and east. Conservation of the parcel will help maintain habitat connectivity across this

important forested landscape for a variety of wildlife. Alvord Lake provides great opportunities for angling, boating, and dispersed recreation such as wildlife viewing and hunting.

Eastern Zone Highlights

Hard Work Motivates Cabin Owners to Prepare for Wildfire

By Crystal Beckman

Hard work from twenty firefighters with chainsaws, mowers, a wood chipper and a skidsteer motivated Pine Cabin Owners to help remove the overabundance of vegetation in the Fort Peck Pines Area south of Glasgow, MT. This area included over twenty landowners that signed up to have work done around their property. For a week, crews worked in hot humid conditions to complete this important hazardous fuels reduction project.

Local champion Bob “Sparky” Hanson, Valley County Deputy Fire Warden and Long Run Volunteer Fire Department initially started visiting cabin owners in the fall of 2015. Hanson explained to them the importance of reducing vegetation around structures and how this could increase the structures’ survivability.



Fire crews posing for picture during fuels mitigation work

State, local and federal agencies partnered to complete the work. This collaborative effort was spearheaded by fire managers from Long Run Fire Department, Valley County, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Crews also worked

along roadways removing vegetation within the right-of-way corridor. This will make travel safer for both firefighters and residents in the event of a wildfire.

All vegetation removed from the cabin sites and roadways was chipped and can be used free of charge by the community.

Schools Attend Wildfire Day

By Karly DeMars

Education efforts continued in 2016 with the annual Wildfire Education Day held in Lewistown. Despite challenging weather conditions in the form of a late season snow storm the BLM and interagency partners from the USFS, USFWS, as well as state and local government hosted the event with over 600 grade school students in attendance. Students learned about fire ecology and its role in the environment, fire suppression equipment and the training fire fighters undergo, and living with fire in the urban interface. Additional education events included fire ecology presentation for local elementary schools and the Judith Basin Homeowners education meeting.



Future Wildland Firefighters

Southwestern Zone Highlights

Prevention Team Success

By Crystal Beckman



In early August, as fire conditions increased, local, state and federal partners in Western Montana created a five-person Fire Prevention Team. The intent was to decrease human-caused fires and stay out of

fire restrictions. The team was comprised of local Missoula County DES, Lolo NF, MT DNRC Southwestern Land Office and Frenchtown Rural Fire Department employees.

By ramping up prevention outreach, the team members provided the area with materials and messages that increased awareness of wildfires and their causes. Area land managers were able to stay out of fire restrictions as a result.

Earlier this year several of the members had gone to a P310 (Prevention Team Member Class). The knowledge and skills they

gained was put to good use and their sharing helped others on the team.

The goal was to ramp up prevention outreach in an effort to hold-off going into fire restrictions. This strategy and these team members were hugely successful! It was realized that having locals staff the team greatly improved the success. Team members had the local knowledge and contacts to expedite progress and accomplishments.

All in all, the money and time spent on the team was put to good use —keeping the area out of stage 1 fire restrictions and reducing human-caused fires!

South Central Zone Highlights



West Yellowstone Fire Department helped the Forest Service out by showing off their brush truck to 1st graders.

South Central Montana

By Marianne Baumberger

A series of wildfire related presentations were given to the West Yellowstone School K-6th grade students again in 2016. These presentations have been given for 4 years now. The presentations have been developed so as students' progress through K-6th grade they will receive a fire lesson each year. Each lesson builds on principles and topics from the previous years, concentrating on transference of knowledge and applicability of the concepts to the environment in which the students live. The goal is that when they finish 6th grade they will better understand wildfire and its effects on differ-

ent species in our ecosystem, as well as the social science aspects including the public's attitudes toward fire and considerations that lead to management decisions.

This year private and US Forest Service lands in Gallatin County did not go into fire restrictions or complete burn bands. The Forest Service intensified prevention patrols making contacts with forest users and increased messages in social media. The county was also increased prevention messages. Due to increased awareness both entities were successful in avoiding the need to go into fire restrictions.

In June the Gallatin County DES, MT DNRC, USFS, FireSafe MT and representatives from Payne West Insurance and

Buffalo Restoration organized and presented a Wildfire Expo. The goal was to empower businesses that interact with local homeowners with messages about creating survivable space in the Wildland Urban Interface and in turn creating Fire Adapted Communities.

Insurance agents, property management agencies, certified arborists/landscapers and realtors attended the one-day event. They learned the benefits and some of the how-tos of creating survivable space, as well as basic fire behavior principles.

By reaching this audience, the group felt these business professionals could be key in communicating to Gallatin County homeowners the reasons to be wildfire adapted. This messaging can also benefit



them in marketing their businesses. It is hoped that this event will be the jump start to more events of its kind in the future.

A multitude of wildfire educational programs were given across the zone. They included school programs as well as local fire prevention events with Fire Departments.

North Dakota Zone Highlights



No report available at time of printing.

Northern Idaho Zone Highlights

North Idaho USFS By Courtney Couch

Northern Idaho had a quiet fire season this year, with below average wildfires reported in all areas.

The Salmon River Ranger District has a new Fire Prevention Technician this year. Her name is Hailey Fuller.

Hailey will be in attendance with Smokey at the Capital Christmas Tree Celebration in Moscow, Idaho in November. The tree is making a cross-country, 2,700 mile road trip from the Payette National Forest to Washington D.C.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest received a transportation grant through "Every Kid in the Park." The grant was called "Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves." The grant paid for 4th/5th grade students from seven schools to attend one of three field trips conducted by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest and organized by Courtney Couch. Students participated and heard presentations on fire ecology, defensible space, wildland engine opera-



Learning about Fire Types At O'Hare Campground

tions, helitack operations, smokejumping, and prescribed fire. As part of this grant, fire lookout, Matti Sand visited classrooms and conducted a creative writing program where students used poetry or prose to



Lewiston Roundup School Tour with Smokey and Rodeo Royalty

voice their experiences with last year's fire season or some aspect of the field trip. Students were also given an

opportunity to discuss their experiences

with being evacuated and/or losing their home last year.

Partners contributing to this grant include the Clearwater RC&D, Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho Department of Lands, and the Clearwater Potlatch Fire Protective Association.

The annual week-long 'Forest Fun Camp' occurred in July. The camp is hosted by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest in partnership with the Kamiah After School Program. Camp organizer Courtney took twenty-five students into the Forest each day where they learned natural resource skills. At the end of the camp, students developed fire prevention public service messages, which were recorded by radio station KIYE and broadcasted on the air throughout the fire season.

The North Central Idaho Fire Prevention Cooperative in partnership with Nez Perce Clearwater National Forest, Idaho Department of Lands, and the Clearwater Potlatch Fire Protective Association received an Idaho Fire-Wise grant to re-write, publish and distribute the "Living With Fire" publication produced by the State of Nevada Extension Office. This publication was distributed to all residents receiving newspapers from the Lewiston Tribune, Clearwater Progress, Clearwater Tribune, and Idaho County Free Press. State Farm Insurance also received copies and distributed them to their clients.

The usual school programs, festivals, parades, and rodeos were conducted across a three county area. Smokey/Woodsy poster contest was again administered. Courtney visited 13 classrooms to help students execute their poster. Courtney discussed composition, illustration techniques, and ideas.

Idaho Lands By Karen Lamb

For the past four years, IDL's Fire Prevention & Education (FP&E) efforts have been taking place largely on two fronts: IDL's 14 area offices and Idaho's approximately 20

recognized Firewise Communities, as IDL is the state liaison with Firewise Communities /USA. The recent hiring of a FP&E Coordinator (Karen Lamb) after the position had been vacant, has strengthened a third front: IDL's Fire Bureau.



"BLAZE" Simulation at the State Fair

By having a dedicated FP&E position once again, IDL has begun to strengthen the state's Firewise Community program through increased communication and support and more proactive efforts to invigorate the community contacts and grow the number of Firewise Communities.

In addition, the FP&EC serves on the Idaho Firewise board of directors and is working with University of Idaho to improve their virtual reality program, "BLAZE," which simulates a homeowner working through the Ready, Set, Go! steps (www.securetheshelter.com).

This year the IDL in Northern Idaho reached at least 2,200 school children with skits, Smokey presentations, videos and an annual poster contest project that spans each school year, from September to May. Additional children-focused events include parades, fairs, etc.

During fire season, the Priest Lake area staffs both fire lookouts with someone to talk with visitors about fire danger and give away Smokey materials.



Current NRCG Prev./Ed. Committee Members

Zone Representatives

North Idaho Zone—Courtney Couch, USFS
Northwest Zone —Lisa Osborn, USFS
Southwest Zone — Chris (CJ) Johnson, USFS
Central Zone—Terina Goicoechea, BLM
South Central Zone—Marianne Baumberger, USFS
Eastern Zone —Karly Krausz, BLM
North Dakota Zone—VACANT

Agency Representatives

State of Idaho—Karen Lamb
State of Montana—Crystal Beckman
BLM—VACANT
USFS—Rita Chandler
BIA—Jeff Moyer
National Park Service—David Eaker
State of North Dakota—Anthony Schultz
Fish & Wildlife Service— Neal Beetch
MT Fire Wardens—VACANT
DES—Nadene Wadsworth
MT Fire Chiefs Association—VACANT

Ad-Hoc Members

All are welcome to participate as Ad-Hoc members. Please contact Crystal Beckman, Committee Chair, (clbeckman@mt.gov) if you are interested in attending meetings and receiving committee e-mails.

NRCG Committee Liaisons

NRCG Board—Mike DeGrosky-MT DNRC
Training Committee—Tim Crosmer—MT DNRC