



The Gila Hotshots lay claim to being the first hotshot crew in region 3. It is known that the crew was originally established in 1968 as an Inter-Regional (IR) Crew. The Gila Inter-Regional Crew was a seasonal crew based at Negrito Fire Base. The base is located on the Reserve Ranger District approximately 40 miles southeast of the town of Reserve, New Mexico.

Inter-Regional crews were created with a similar mission to today's Interagency Hotshot crews (IHC). The idea was to give the Forest Service a pool of crews who could perform the "tough" assignments on large fires. During this same time period in California, Hotshot crews were beginning to make their names known in the world of fire. In the early 1970's a movement was made throughout most of the Forest Service to standardize the IR and Hotshot crews. Other agencies began to support Hotshot Crews and the crews became national resources required to meet a set of nationwide standards, to reflect this the term Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC) was brought about. It was because of this event that the name was changed for the first time. In 1974, the Gila Inter-Regional crew became known as the Gila IHC.

The Negrito Fire Base has been home to the Gila Hotshots since the beginning and is a special place to everyone who has worked here. What makes Negrito special is the remoteness of its location. The base is about an hour's drive from Reserve and is located approximately 6 miles from the northern edge of the Gila Wilderness as the crow flies.

With the conversion of the crew into an IHC came more structure. Until then, the crew did not have a set roster of crewmembers or overhead. Firefighters were hired and stationed at Negrito without being attached to any particular program. They served as smokechasers, helitack or member of the IR crew, as needed.

As the 1970's drew to a close, another change came to the Hotshot program. 1977 brought another IHC program to the Forest, the Silver City IHC in Silver City, NM. Not wanting a semblance of favoritism, no crew would carry the forest name. So, in 1978 the name of the crew was changed from Gila to Negrito. The Negrito name was carried for over twenty years before the tentacles of political correctness firmly gripped the crew. The beloved "Negrito" name was changed, and the original "Gila" name was chosen in 1999.

Those who have led the crew include the following:

1968-1973 Various Foreman	1991-1995 Robert Morales
1974-1975 Tom Reed	1995-1999 Doug Kastner
1975-1978 Ricky Delgado	1999-2016 Dewey Rebbe
1979-1980 Gary Lukas	2016-Present Jeff Campbell
1983-1990 Jerome MacDonald	