



**National Park Service
Fire Ecology Annual Report
Calendar Year 2006**

Summary

With the addition of a new fire effects crew, along with the collaboration of Everglade's fire ecologist, Big Cypress' fire effects monitoring was examined with a new perspective. This has ultimately led to a new development in monitoring methods and protocols as well as an on-going project of revising the fire effects monitoring plan. In addition to scheduled monitoring tasks; two pilot plots were established along with one additional monitoring plot that examines encroachment of shrubs on prairies. Our photo point methods were fine tuned so that we may better capture the "story" of time for each location. All photo points located in similar vegetation types area being re-evaluated as to their necessity.

Table 1. Fire Effects Plot Workload 2006

Park	Monitoring Unit	Type of Plot (FMH, photo point, other)	Pre-burn	Immed. Post	Postburn (1-20 yrs)	Total Plots
Big Cypress NP	Prairie	FMH Grass plot	3	1	0	16
Big Cypress NP	Slash Pine	FMH Forest plot	2	0	0	12
Big Cypress NP	Cypress Prairie	FMH plot	0	0	0	5
Big Cypress NP	Mechanical Treatment	Pilot sampling	2	0	0	2
Big Cypress	Slash Pine/Palmetto	Photo point	3	3	3	25

NP						
Big Cypress NP	Prairie	Photo point	2	1	4	23
Big Cypress NP	Cypress Prairie	Photo point	0	0	3	10
Big Cypress NP	Mechanical Treatment	Photo point	0	0	2	2
Total			12	5	12	95

Table 2. Fire Ecology Staffing 2006

Monitor	Starting Date	Ending Date	# of Pay Periods	Training and Development
Eric Neiswanger	1/1/06	12/31/03	24	A-110, S-212, S-271, S-131, RAWS, completed FEMO taskbook, completed PLDO task sheet, attended CSSS conference and Pine Rockland.
Brianne Davidson	1/8/06	12/09/06	24	S-212, S-290, S-131, S-271, A-110, completed HECM taskbook, completed PLDO task sheet, attended CSSS conference
Jenny McCormick	1/1/06	1/21/06	2	

Table 3. Fire effects crew accomplishments and area of focus.

Category	Percent Time	Notes
FMH plots	10%	Estimated amount of time spent collecting plot data; includes any preparation time.
WUI plots	0%	
Mechanical Treatment Plots	5%	Installed two pilot plots
Other plot work	15%	Photo Point plots
Fire Assignments	15%	- Crew assisted on 22 prescribed fires - Two crew members each did a one month detail with the WNP Fire Use Module - Crew assisted on numerous wildfires.
Fuels Project work	<5%	Collected fuel samples at least once a month, assisted with fuel reduction around RCW trees
Data entry	35%	Completed data entry of all monitoring plots from the time they were installed through 2006, documented photo point data, updated shape files, produced and archived maps, managed fire reports and weather data
Data conversion	<5%	Converted GPS data to shape files

Data analysis	0	No data analysis at this time
Supervision/Admin	<5%	Fire Effects specialist supervised the two monitors; misc travel and time paperwork
Training	<5%	Each crew member had refresher training and completed S-212, A-110, PDLO, S-271, and S-131
Miscellaneous	10%	• Vehicle/buggy/office/FOC cache maintenance • RAWS maintenance • Attended Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow meeting and presented relevant information • Cooperated with Rick Anderson (ENP Fire Ecologist), Jim Snyder (USGS Research Biologist), Jim Burch (BICY Vegetation Specialist), and other key players in establishing monitoring methods and protocols

Table 4. Prescribed Fire Specialist Accomplishments/Focus Area

Category	Percent Time	Accomplishments/Focus Areas
General Planning	25%	Re-organized burn units to reduce number of plans. Completed one landscape level plan for the interior of the preserve.
Monitoring Plans	<5%	Reviewed monitoring plan, will continue to evaluate and rewrite in FY07
Presentations	<5%	Presented fire management information to Senator Martinez in informal meeting in April, hosted four visitors from Guatemala on prescribed burn, Presented prescribe fire plans for FY07 to resource management staff
NPS Meetings/ Task Groups	5%	Attended the national fire management workshop in Phoenix, AZ in December
Interagency Work	10%	Assisted Panther Wildlife Refuge and Fakahatchee State Preserve on prescribed burns, received assistance from Everglades NP on prescribed burns
Fire Assignments and Fuels Projects	25%	LTAN (t) assignment to Wenatchee, WA on Fire Use incident - Tinpan/Flick fire. Completed 26,721 acres of prescribed burning
Research		Cooperated with Gary Slater (blue bird researcher) and Jim Snyder (USGS) on research burns at Raccoon Point
Monitoring Field Work	5%	Trips to photo points, fuels collection and weather station maintenance
Data Entry		Monitors completed data entry and photo point documentation, assisted with map production for burn plans
Data Management and Conversion		Consolidated and organized GIS data and fire history maps
Data Analysis		No Data Analysis at this time
Supervision/Admin	25%	Filled the RX Tech position (GS-7), supervised two fire effects monitors. Acting Fire Management Officer from March 1 – July 1
Training & Professional Development		Completed S-590 and began taskbook as LTAN (t). Assisted with instruction of S271, PLDO and I-200 training.

Challenges in 2006

The first 7 months of 2006 was a time of transition once again for the BICY fire management staff. The FMO that had begun 8 months earlier returned to Atlanta as the regional fuels management specialist, this left the preserve once again without an FMO. The prescribed fire

specialist and the suppression specialist shared duties as Acting FMO from March 1 – July 1 when a new FMO was hired. Staffing continued to be an issue with as many as 10 positions remained unfilled during this time period. The Whiskeytown fire use module was brought in to assist with prescribed burning, but dry weather continued from February through May recording no rain for up to 75 days. These conditions raised fire danger conditions to the point of requesting severity funding for the later half of the spring. The rains returned in June and prescribed burn operations began again for the summer season with the assistance of the Buffalo River Fire Use Module. The lead fire effects monitor position was vacated in January of 2006 and remains unfilled to date.

Over the next 6 to 12 months I anticipate my focus to be on revising and updating the remaining burn plans that are currently in place. As these plans are completed, reviewed and approved, prescribed burns will be conducted to meet our target for FY07. The prescribed fire program currently has one GS-7 vacancy (Lead Fire Effects Monitor). I will be working toward reclassifying this position from a Forestry Technician (0462) to a Biological Technician (0404) and filling this vacancy as soon as possible. I have discussed with Everglades National Park and Panther National Wildlife Refuge the possibility of coordinating our fire effects monitoring efforts. We will plan a meeting to brief each other on the current status of our monitoring programs and will share ideas to enhance, simplify, revise and update our monitoring techniques and photo point protocols. The biggest challenges facing our fire effects program is employee retention. I am hopeful to recruit an individual that is interested in focusing on the science and fire ecology of south Florida.