

Bryce Canyon National Park Fire Management Accomplishments for FY2001
Ross Wilmore, UT Group Fuels Management Specialist/BRCA FMO

Introduction

FY 2001 proved to be a productive year for the Bryce Canyon NP fire management program, even though prescribed fire operations were suspended from January to June, and again immediately following the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. NPS fire staff made significant progress on three BRCA fuels projects (two hazard fuels reduction and one wildland/urban interface) for a total of 1,396 treated acres. The BRCA fire management program accomplished its mission with 2.0 FTE and expended approximately \$147,587, for an average fuels treatment cost of \$103/acre. BRCA fire resources assisted with 2 BLM-Cedar City Field Office prescribed fires, 3 USFS Dixie NF prescribed fires, and one prescribed fire unit prep project at LAME. Essential relationships within the local interagency fire community, reestablished in 1999, have led to the total integration of BRCA into the Color Country Fire Management Zone; BRCA fire resources regularly assisted the Dixie National Forest and State of Utah-Southwest Area with suppression activities. BRCA contributed personnel to three Type 2 handcrews drawn from the local area. The Fuels Management Specialist continued to serve as a regular member of one of the two Utah Type 2 Incident Management Teams as a Fire Behavior Analyst. The Fuels Management Specialist (who serves as the BRCA Fire Management Officer) not only continued his regional role within the NPS-Utah Group with oversight from the Zion NP FMO, but he served as the ZION FMO during the busiest period of the fire season while the position was vacant.

In summary, BRCA counted 72 total personnel responses to fire assignment requests for a total of 36 fire numbers. This nearly equaled the fire numbers counted in 2000 and tripled the numbers in 1999.

Prescribed Fire Accomplishments

The following BRCA fuels treatments were completed:

Fireline along the north perimeter of the Yovimpa 2 Prescribed Fire unit (located along the ridge west of the Agua Canyon Viewpoint) was completed by the Dixie Interagency Hotshot Crew in May 2001, for a total of 10 mechanically treated acres.

The East Creek Ridge Phase 2 Prescribed Fire was completed in June 2001 for 170 acres. Contributing resources included BRCA Park Rangers, Zion NP, and BLM-CCD fire management personnel. The unit was located north of the Swamp Canyon trailhead; the burn objectives were the reduction of hazardous fuels build-ups and the return of fire into the ecosystem. This was a first entry burn. This was also the first prescribed fire conducted in the Intermountain Region, and the first broadcast burn in the western U.S., following the lifting of the prescribed fire moratorium (initiated west of the 100th Meridian after the Cerro Grande fire of 2000).

Mechanical fuel reduction was completed in the Historic District of the Loop Hazard Fuels Reduction Project, a wildland/urban interface project, during July, 2001, for 25 acres. Contributing resources included Zion NP fire personnel and Fire Use Modules from ZION and YELL.

The East Creek Ridge Phases 1 and 3 Prescribed Fires were completed in September 2001 for 1,191 acres. Contributing resources included BRCA Park Rangers, Zion NP, and USFS-DIF fire management personnel. The units were located north of the Sheep Creek Connector Trail and south of the Paria/Bryce point access road; the burn objectives were the reduction of hazardous fuels build-ups and the return of fire into the ecosystem. These were primarily first entry burns.

Other projects were not completed due to the prescribed fire moratorium, wildland fire activity, and a lack of available personnel. Each of the remaining fuels projects funded for FY2001 was rolled into FY2002. The planning effort continued for the Loop and Yovimpa 2 prescribed fire projects.

BRCA personnel assisted in the following off-park prescribed fire projects:

The BRCA fire crew with E-621 assisted Powell RD, Dixie NF fire staff with the Dave's Hollow Prescribed Pile Burn (1 acre) in June 2001.

The Fuels Management Specialist served as an aerial ignition specialist for the 500-ac Sanford Creek Rx burn, Powell RD, Dixie NF, in June. The BRCA fire crew in E-621 assisted with ground ignition in the same operation.

One BRCA hazard fuels crewmember serving a detail with the Zion Fire Use Module assisted with unit prep on the 600-ac Harbor Bay Prescribed Fire, LAME, in August 2001.

The BRCA fire crew with E-621 assisted Dixie NF fire staff with various operations connected with the 2,000-ac Poison Creek Prescribed Fire (Escalante RD, DIF) throughout the 2001 fire season.

The BRCA hazard fuels crew leader in T-321 assisted the BLM-CCD fire staff with the 1000-ac Sandy Creek Prescribed Fire in September 2001.

The BRCA hazard fuels crew leader in T-321 again assisted the BLM-CCD fire staff with the 600-ac Dry Creek Prescribed Fire, also in September 2001.

Wildland Fire Suppression Accomplishments

BRCA fire management personnel, with assistance from BRCA Park Rangers, suppressed the following in-park wildland fires:

8058 Fire (0.1 ac, lightning caused, natural out, 6/7/01)

The North Entrance Fire (0.1 ac, lightning, 7/10/01)

Whiteman Bench Fire (0.1 ac lightning, 8/8/01),

BRCA personnel assisted with the management of 22 off-park wildland fires in 2001. BRCA fire personnel provided initial attack services in Engine 621 and Tender 321, and extended attack services as handcrew members. The Fuels Management Specialist continued to serve with Jim Shell's Type 2 Incident Management Team as a Fire Behavior Analyst and responded to 4 wildland fire assignments. In addition, the Fuels Management Specialist served as the acting ZION/UT Group Fire Management Officer from July to September 2001, during the busiest fire season in the history of that park.

Preparedness Accomplishments

Equipment: The Wildland Fire Cache inventory continued to be improved with the purchase of essential supplies and new tents. Both Engine 621 and Tender 321 required several items in order to be completely fire-ready; these items had been ordered and received at the time of this report.

Staffing: The Fuels Management Specialist was unable to hire a suitably-qualified Term, STF GS-6 hazard fuels crew leader. The GS-5 hazard fuels technician served in that capacity. Two individuals were hired to fill the GS-4 engine crewperson positions.

Additional BRCA Resource Availability: BRCA Park Rangers were utilized as firefighters on several prescribed and wildland fires. BRCA Resource Management staff served as firefighters and key public information personnel during the implementation of the East Creek Ridge Prescribed Fire.

Conclusion

Fiscal Year 2001 marked another significant expansion of the fire management program at Bryce Canyon National Park. More projects would have been completed had the Service-wide prescribed fire program not remained suspended until June. The fall and winter of 2001-2002 will be spent preparing and implementing a number of prescribed fire plans, and revising the park's Fire Management Plan. A wildland/urban interface plan will be included in the FMP revision.

