

# *Southeast Region* **Fire Division Report FY2016**





# From the Chief

The Southeast Region treated more acres with prescribed fire in FY 16 than in all previous years; even though we've experienced significant reductions in personnel and funding. Our fire managers effectively and efficiently used various strategies to suppress unwanted wildfires, supported out-of-region suppression efforts, responded to Hurricane Matthew and intentionally initiated and grew relationships with partners. Most importantly, we did it safely. To say FY16 was a good year is an understatement.

It is rewarding to work with a ‘team of professionals.’ I’m appreciative that our ‘team’ is composed of individuals from all programs and leadership levels within the Service. The Southeast Region does a very good job of focusing resources on the priorities that need to be done; regardless of funding source or boundary lines. I am also appreciative to work with ‘professionals’ who have a solid understanding of wildland fire and the critical role it plays in the Service’s mission of conservation. Our team of professionals has a positive ‘can do’ attitude that was essential for the year’s successes.

The uncertainties of budgets and politics are becoming constants when considering the future. These uncertainties can be worrisome and increase anxiety. We are part of proven team that is as resilient as the lands we manage. We will continue to effectively use the limited resources provided and do great work. We’ll plan for future uncertainties, because that’s what reliable organizations do. Come what may, the Southeast region will manage fire successfully.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vincent J. Doyle".

*Cover: USFWS firefighters watch the helicopter as it makes an ignition pass from their airboats during a large prescribed(18,500 acre) fire at A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR, July 6th, 2016; credit USFWS/Joseph Whelan.*

*Inside cover: A prescribed fire conducted on Savannah NWR burned 405 acres along the Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive (pools 12/13) on February 18, 2016. This prescribed fire helps reduce wildfire risk to surrounding communities and improve wildlife habitat by removing old vegetation; credit Judy Doyle.*



# Zone 1

## Year Overview

Zone 1 encompasses the National Wildlife Refuges located in North Carolina, with fire staff located at three of those refuges in the central portion of the Zone.

In general, eastern North Carolina experienced record-setting precipitation totals during FY 16; culminating in the arrival of hurricane Matthew during the end of September. Impacts across the Zone from the storm included severe flooding, some structural damage, and significant damage to the natural resource base across the nine refuges. Due to timely storm tracking and predictions, we undertook precautionary actions in excess of a week prior to landfall. Cleanup operations subsequent to the storm are still underway. Storm assessment itself required more than 10 days to categorize.

## Wildfire

In April of this year, the Whipping Creek Road fire was started by roadside mowing operations along US Route 264 north of Engelhard on the mainland in Dare and Hyde counties. The fire grew to over 15,000 acres and required a type 2 team to respond and manage. Fire danger conditions were serious because of the cured live fuels and an extended period of drying weather that made the 1, 10, and 100 hour fuels available. However, the fire occurred in an area where the hydrology of the organic soils has been the subject of restoration efforts or generally only lightly disturbed, and the peat was holding high amounts of water. This prevented the fire from developing a serious ground fire component. As a result, we were able to declare the fire out within four weeks of its ignition, far less than the average length of burning for a large fire in the Pocosin environment across much of the zone. Additionally, the ultimate cost of this fire was under \$1.6 million. Contrast that to the last two project fires that occurred here, which together cost nearly \$50 million and required more than six months each to extinguish.

Significant wildfires were also reported on and near Cedar Island NWR. Three human-caused threat fires in excess of 120 acres were attacked by the NCFS last spring, all initiated within a mile of the refuge; another fire caused by military operations burned an island of similar size adjacent to our property. Finally, we experienced a 24 acre lightning fire on a marsh where we had conducted a prescribed fire during 2015.

Zone 1 staff is working closely with the NPS to develop strategies to assist in the fire control program across the Outer Banks group of Parks. This year we responded to and extinguished two fires on CAHA property.

## Fuels Management

2016 has been a record year for precipitation in Eastern North Carolina. Until hurricane Matthew impacted the Zone in late September and early October, the Zone experienced fairly regular, significant rainfall. This

effectively eliminated most of our burn windows and resulted in few opportunities to safely employ prescribed fire across our area. We were able to conduct burns at Mackay Island, Pea Island and Alligator River NWRs. We mobilized to Cedar Island twice, only to return when conditions prevented us from trying burns there. In total, we burned less than 1500 acres across the Zone this year. The resulting backlog is now slated to be attempted during the upcoming fiscal year.

## Zone Staff Assignments

While it was extremely wet in North Carolina this year, we were able to assist our partners on fire and severity assignments in places from Florida and North Carolina to Wyoming and California.

In all, Zone 1 filled a total of 36 resource orders on 22 separate incidents.

## Training

Annual refresher training was conducted for all FWS personnel along with chainsaw, ATV, helicopter crew and manager, and plastic sphere dispensing refresher trainings. In addition, several of the Zone's fire crew are members of the Southern IMTs and attended the team meetings held in early spring.

Fire staff provided Defensive Driving and AED/Basic first aid refreshers to Refuge staff in Manteo. We also helped develop and conduct joint fire equipment/safety training with local resources from the NCFS.

## Of Note

Cory Waters is entering his last year as chair of the Interagency Aerial Ignition Committee of the NWCG. He has completed instructor training to lead the hands-on aviation water ditching class as one of the few FWS employees certified to do so in the Region.

Lisa Meekins continues to maintain qualifications as a fully qualified EMT with the state of NC, a task that requires extensive training and dedication. Continuing education is required, and Lisa is involved with the local EMS assisting in medical emergencies across Dare County.

Support operations are many and varied, with members of the fire crew assisting with projects at many of the Refuges within the Zone. Experiencing a hurricane the strength of Matthew merely increases the opportunities to do so.

## Staffing Changes

We welcomed Gregg Buckalew this spring as the new FMO at Pocosin Lakes NWR.

Melvin Walston, a Fire Equipment Operator at Pocosin Lakes NWR left the fire crew to accept a maintenance foreman position at Mattamuskeet NWR.



Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Bert Plante			FAL3	
Gregg Buckalew			DIVS	
Kenny Powell			HEQB	
Lisa Meekins	EMT continuing		ORDM	ORDM
Amy Midgett			ORDM	
Eric Meekins			DZIA	
Cory Waters	Water Ditching Instructor, RX-341	A-225, IAT, A-110, PLDO		
Donnie Harris			INVF	
Jon Powers			FAL3	
Bobby Govan			FAL3	
Jeff Swain			DZIA	
Brian VanDruten			ICT5	



The Whipping Creek Fire started on April 18, 2016 and burned 15,453 acres on private, DOD and USFWS lands before being contained at the end of April; credit USFWS.

# Zone 2

## Year Overview

Zone 2 covers fire management needs for all Service lands in Georgia and South Carolina and hosts fire resources at five stations across the Zone.

## Wildfire

Despite a dry spring over parts of the Zone, this year had low fire occurrence with only 10 fires on refuge lands for a total of 1,039 acres burned. Three of these wildfires were managed for resource benefit as resource managers worked closely with fire staff to allow fires to mimic a natural ignition. Two of the resource benefit fires were lightning strike island fires at Okefenokee NWR. The largest fire for resource benefit (and a fairly rare occurrence) was at Savannah NWR when a neighbor's burn jumped onto the East Marsh Unit. Allowing the fire to burn to natural and maintained boundaries reduced risk to crews and kept suppression costs to a minimum. Post-fire evaluations confirmed that these fires behaved as expected and they were beneficial to refuge habitats. The Mitchell Fire at Okefenokee NWR even burned around RCW cavity trees without any apparent damage.

The Zone continued its involvement with the South Atlantic Type 3 Team organization, and is planning to formalize the team for possible deployment in FY17. The Type 3 Team is a partnership between FWS Zones 2, 5, and interagency partners. Its purpose is to provide an organized response to extended attack fires without incurring the expense of Type 1 or 2 teams. Type 3 incidents happen fairly often at Okefenokee and Merritt Island NWRs, as well as with other local federal partners such as Cumberland Island National Seashore and the Osceola National Forest. This type of team approach helps build local capacity to coordinate an effective response and the ability to work seamlessly with other federal and state partners.



*A prescribed fire being conducted on Carolina Sandhills NWR, this year the refuge more than doubled their average acreage burned with help of Resilient Landscape funding, credit USFWS/Mark Parker.*

Okefenokee NWR has been a significant contributor to the success of Baker County's (FL) recognition as a national FAC (Fire Adapted Community) hub. Currently, there are only five FAC hubs in the eastern United States. Work is underway to expand FACs into Georgia, with three counties targeted around the refuge, while expanding into two

additional counties in Florida. The interagency FAC steering committee was also able to secure a Firewise Coordinator position, working for the Baker County Fire Department, the first such position of its kind in the country.

## Fuels Management

Just as the region had a banner year for fuels accomplishments, so did the Zone. This was the first year for us to realize the benefits of Resilient Landscape (RL) dollars on the ground. The addition of seven seasonal hires and a five month helicopter contract were tremendous benefits to the Zone and beyond. We finished with 116 prescribed fires completed for 38,686 acres. This was a new record for the Zone that helped us start working our way back into the regime we need to see to maintain our fire-dependent habitats.

Resilient Landscape (RL) funding also helped us to engage with neighbors and partners in new ways. Since the RL dollars are tied to DOI lands throughout



*District fire crews preparing to continue ignitions on a Pinckney Island NWR prescribed burn; credit USFWS/Rob Wood.*

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	Off-Station Assignments
Brantley Boatright					GA
Cory Bryant		RT130		HMGB	GA
Rocky Chesser		RT130	SOFR	DIVS	GA
Reggie Forcine		RT130, PLDOrt			GA, FL
Andy Heisey	M581	RT130	TFLD, HMGB		GA, FL, CA
Terri Jenkins	L481				GA, AZ, ID, FL
Reese Kerbow	L481				TX
Fed Privett					TX, ID, AL
Nathan Herron	GA Rx Cert				ID
Toby Price	ICS200, IS800				GA, WY, OR, WA
John Mason	GA Rx Cert,				VA, GA, ID
Carl Schmidt					MN, GA
Matt Smith					FL, NC, CO
Randy McLain					CO, WY, ID
Derrick Odegard		RT130			CO, WY, ID
Mark Parker		RT130			
Adam McCullough	M581	RT130			MS, CA, FL
Matt Sutkowski		RT130	ABRO	ABRO	FL, CA
Bert Wyatt		RT130			CO, WY, ID, FL
Rob Wood	L481	RT130	OSC2		MS, ID, GA

the South Atlantic LCC we worked closely with the National Park Service and other neighbors and NGOs to better manage Longleaf Pine habitats. Through agreements, we shared resources for burning and Longleaf management off FWS lands and strengthened collaborative partnerships.

The "Most Improved Award" this year goes to Carolina Sandhills NWR. With Resilient Landscape grant funding support, the refuge stepped up, posting some outstanding numbers. Carolina Sandhills' accomplishments include 40 prescribed fires for a total of 11,613 acres. These numbers more than double the average of the past five years.

Additionally, Carolina Sandhills personnel conducted nine prescribed fires at Pee Dee NWR. It is of note that Carolina Sandhills NWR hosts the largest population of RCWs on Service lands, and includes some 45,000 acres of Longleaf habitat. The Resilient Landscape grant dollars have been crucial in providing the resources needed to return this fire-dependent habitat to improved conditions.

## Zone Staff Assignments

As in most years, the Zone offered support for the western fire season with plenty of help during the months of July and August in particular. The chart above captures most of that activity. Our Zone has eight personnel who serve in various roles with the Southern Area Incident Management Teams and most were active this year. Carl from Piedmont NWR was able to go on a Rx fire detail to Minnesota and provide leadership support to Region 3 as a qualified RXB2. Terri made it out several times to serve as Prevention Team Leader. The Zone also sent help to Zone 7 when they had their hands full with the Grand Bature Fire in February.

## Of Note

### Honors, Awards, Committees

The South Georgia - North Florida Fire Initiative (which includes Okefenokee NWR and many other partners) was recognized this year by the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) with the Pulaski Award for outstanding performance in the areas of interagency collaboration, cooperation, and coordination. The refuge has a long history of working with state, federal,

and private partners to manage lands to minimize wildfire risk to communities and promote healthy habitats. This is the second time that NIFC has recognized the partnership in the greater Okefenokee area, which speaks volumes to the good work done there over the years.

John Mason continues to serve on the steering committee for the GA Rx Fire Council and Reggie Forcine is on the IHOG steering committee representing FWS Aviation.

Congratulations to Suzie Heisey, Okefenokee NWR Supervisory Refuge Ranger, for receiving the Regional Fire Leadership Award for outreach. Suzie serves as Public Information Officer on fires and all hazard assignments for refuges and is now the primary PIO for the Southern Area Gold Team. Adam McCullough, Savannah NWR Fire Equipment Operator, was awarded the Regional Fire Leadership award for prescribed fire. Nice work Suzie and Adam, your professionalism and leadership are recognized and appreciated.

## Staffing Changes

This year we were pleased to welcome Reese Kerbow as station FMO at Okefenokee NWR. Reese has a depth of fire experience with other Interior agencies as well as time with the US Forest Service. Though we won't list them all by name, the addition of seven seasonal firefighters (four at Carolina Sandhills and three at Okefenokee NWR) was a huge boon to the program. These seasonals were a product of RL funds and spent four to six months running around the Zone and beyond helping conduct burns, completing burn prep, conducting monitoring, and assisting with refuge forestry programs.

Okefenokee NWR did lose one Forestry Technician late this Fiscal Year that we hope to rehire soon.

# Zone 4

## Year Overview

Zone 4 covers fire management needs for all Service lands in northwest Florida and most of Alabama and hosts fire resources at three stations across the Zone.

FY 2016 was another record year for prescribed fire in Zone 4. On Refuge lands 49,558 acres were treated with prescribed fire. Resilient Landscapes (RL) funding provided an exclusive-use helicopter that facilitated a large portion of these burns. Additionally, 14,555 acres were burned on cooperators' lands using the RL funded helicopter. Extensive help from our state cooperators, PFTC crews, volunteers from the UF Student Association for Fire Ecology (SAFE), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) helped fill voids in staffing during prescribed fire operations. Wildfire activity was light throughout the Zone.

## Wildfire

St. Vincent and St. Marks NWRs had no wildfires on refuge lands. St. Marks had one escaped prescribed fire that was declared a wildfire of 2.2 acres. St. Marks responded to four threat fires and had one assist with the Apalachicola NF. Lower Suwannee NWR responded to six local wildfires totaling 1,317 acres: one large local assist on the Cedar Key Scrub Rx escape – 1,150 acres, one threat fire near the Refuge boundary and three on Refuge. Wheeler and Key Cave NWR each had one small wildfire responded to by local VFDs. Egmont Key had an 81 acre wildfire that required the help of multiple cooperators for suppression; Florida Park Service, Florida Forest Service, and the Tampa Harbor Pilots Association.

## Fuels Management

St. Vincent NWR had 5,509 acres of prescribed fire treatments. A record year of prescribed fire treatments at St. Marks accounted for 33,970 acres, nearly half the refuge land base. Lower Suwannee NWR accomplished 17 prescribed fires for 4,914 acres. Thirty acres were treated with prescribed fire at Chassahowitzka NWR. Eufaula NWR had two prescribed fire treatments totaling 959 acres.



*USFWS firefighter Reggie Forcine walking back down the line during a prescribed fire at Mountain Longleaf NWR; credit USFWS/Josh O'Connor.*

Mountain Longleaf NWR had 2,889 acres of prescribed fire treatments. Refuge personnel from Wheeler NWR accomplished 200 acres of prescribed fire at Key Cave NWR. All total for Refuge lands prescribed fire in Zone 4, nine refuges conducted 100 prescribed fires in 55 days for a total of 49,558 acres.

Zone 4 fire crews assisted federal, state, local, and TNC cooperators on multiple prescribed fires. On the Flintrock Unit of TNC, prescribed fire was accomplished on 14,555 acres using the RL funded helicopter. Assistance was also provided for prescribed fires at other Refuges, and several U.S. Air Force installations. In addition, 35 acres were mechanically treated (primarily maintenance and clearing of firelines and boundary lines).

## Zone Staff Assignments

This was not a very busy year for out of area assignments. Eleven people from Zone 4 went on over 15 assignments to 11 different states. Zone 4 had five members on Southern Area IMTs.

## Training

All red-carded personnel attended RT130 and S-212 refresher trainings. Aviation and PLDO refresher training was also held. L-280 was hosted at St. Marks NWR.

## Of Note

Fire management staff contributed heavily to general refuge projects including biological monitoring, maintenance, exotic vegetation control, reforestation, facility construction, road maintenance and repair, visitor services and outreach.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	Off Station Assignments
Alexander Beaver	S-212, ATV, Specialty Track		FAL3	FAL3	
Anthony DiMaggio	M-581	SA Engine Academy	HMGB	TFLD	
Bart Rye		PFTC Field Coordinator		DIVS	
Brian Pippin		L-280			GA, CA
Chris Lewzader					GA
Dalton Pelt	L-280		FAL3	FAL#	
David Moody				BCM	CA, VA
Elliot Tobin	S-212, ATV, Specialty Track		FAL3, FAL2, FFT1	FAL3	ID, WY
Greg Titus	S-590	RX-341, S-130/190	FBAN		
Jason Candeto	L-280, SA Engine Academy				
Jason Vehrs					ID
Jennifer Hinckley		S-248	ICT3		
John Edwards					TN
Josh Havird	RX-341	RT-130, S-212r	RXB2	ICT4	ID, MN, MS, WY
Meagan Bieber	D-310, L-280, S-231, S-261			PLDO	AZ
Reid Tilley	L-280				
Sam Matelski	S-131, S-133, SA Engine Academy		FFT1, FAL2		CO, MN
Stan Garner					ID
Travis Pollard				FIRB	FL, WA
Vic Doig	L-480	RT-130, PLDO			

Wildland fire outreach consisted of many venues from a float in the Springtime Tallahassee parade, winning "Best in Parade," to presentations at Refuge festivals, and local schools.

Jennifer Hinckley had a two week assignment to the Washington Office.

Greg Titus and Jennifer Hinckley attended the USFWS National Fire Management meeting in Fredericksburg, VA.

## Honors, Awards, Committees

Bart Rye serves on the North FL Rx Fire Steering Committee. Vic Doig serves on the steering committee for the Southern Area Engine Academy. Greg Titus serves on the FICC Operations Committee and the TN/KY academy steering committee.

## Staffing Changes

Jennifer Hinckley left the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a Forest Fuels position on the Tahoe National Forest. Joey Lord moved to a full time Law Enforcement Officer position at St. Marks NWR. Bart Rye was promoted to Wildland Fire Operations Specialist at St. Marks NWR. Anthony DiMaggio was promoted to Lead Forestry Tech at Lower Suwannee NWR. Jason Candeto finished his Fire Pathways appointment at St. Marks NWR. Dalton Pelt finished his 180-day RL funded appointment.

Reid Tilley left his 180-day RL funded appointment due to an injury from an off-duty vehicle accident. Sam Matelski will complete his Pathways fire internship in December 2016, with lots of fire and

all-hazard experience. Dan Frisk came on board as the North Florida Complex Project Leader. Chassahowitzka NWR has a new management team with Joyce Palmer as Project Leader and Ernie Clarke as Deputy Project Leader.

# Zone 5

## Year Overview

Zone 5 covers fire management needs for all Service lands in eastern peninsular Florida and hosts fire resources at three stations across the Zone.

Fiscal Year 2016 was a good year for Zone 5. Wildfire season started off slow, but picked up in March and April and the Zone stayed dry through July which is not typical. We had several small fires throughout the Zone with a few larger incidents at Lake Woodruff NWR, St. Johns NWR and Merritt Island NWR.

The Zone Fire Management Staff had a good year with the implementation of 37 prescribed fires for a total of 63,247 acres treated.

The Zone Fire Management Staff continued to emphasize training for all personnel this year. This included training courses, opportunities on wildfires and prescribed fires within the Zone as well as off-Zone fire assignments.

## Wildfire

Fire management personnel responded to 28 wildfires throughout the Zone this year. We had wildfires on A.R.M Loxahatchee NWR, St. Johns NWR, Lake Woodruff NWR and Merritt Island NWR. The majority of the fires were small in size, but we did have large fire events on Lake Woodruff NWR, St. Johns NWR and Merritt Island NWR this year.

## Fuels Management

We implemented prescribed burns on several Refuges within the Zone. We accomplished 155 acres at St. Johns NWR, 7,907 at Lake Woodruff NWR, 17,381 at Merritt Island NWR, and 36,812 at A.R.M Loxahatchee NWR. We completed a 992-acre prescribed fire for the Canaveral National Seashore (NPS), which is adjacent to Merritt Island NWR. We also assisted with prescribed fires at Florida Panther NWR, Okefenokee NWR, and with the U.S. Air Force at Canaveral Air Force Station, MacDill Air Force Base, and Avon Park Bombing Range.



Merritt Island firefighters check working around NASA infrastructure on a prescribed fire that took place in July 2016; credit USFWS.

## Zone Staff Assignments

Zone personnel assisted with wildfire support in several states this year including Idaho, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Florida. These assignments are crucial to the development of personnel who respond to wildfires.

Zone 5 worked with Brevard and Volusia Counties to provide several personnel who assisted with instructing at the Central Florida engine academy hosted by the Florida Forest Service, Brevard County and Volusia County.

## Honors, Awards, Committees

Grant Gifford is a member of a National Fire and Operations Safety Team sub-committee for engine standards and is working as the Regional Radio Coordinator. In addition to those duties, Grant filled in as the Regional Helicopter Manager for the service ship for over two months this year. Chris Wright has served as the Regional Helicopter Manager for over seven months this year.

## Of Note

In addition to Zone 5 fire-funded personnel, non-fire funded personnel also assisted with 34 days of off-Zone assignments and completed much needed task books for the Zone.

## Staffing Changes

Zone 5 lost Jay Mickey this year. Jay was the AFMO at Merritt Island and took the Zone FMO job at Wichita Mountains NWR in Region 2.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Ryan Sharpe	L-380, S-310, S-410	S-212, Engine Academy	DIVS	
Dave Moran		S-212, Engine Academy	RXB2	
Robert Alonso	L-380	S-212, Engine Academy		ICT4
Chris Wright		S-212, Engine Academy		
Jay Mickey	L-480			
Michael Good	S-310, S-410			
Patrick Pearson				OPSC1



USFWS firefighters patrol a prescribed fire with airboats during a large prescribed (18,500 acre) fire at A.R.M Loxahatchee NWR, July 6th, 2016. Prescribed fire is an important management tool that reduces the risk and impact of wildfires to the neighboring communities while improving the quality of the habitat. Airboats and helicopters are used by firefighters when conducting prescribed fires in large marshes in the southeast; credit USFWS/Joseph Whelan.

# Zone 6

## Year Overview

Zone 6 covers fire management needs for all Service lands in southwestern peninsular Florida and the Caribbean, and hosts fire resources at three stations across the Zone.

Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) was a very wet year that extended into Florida's "dry" season. As a result, water levels and fuel moistures were high and wildfire activity was minimal in Zone 6. There was only one significant fire on Florida Panther NWR.

## Wildfire

Since the implementation of Southwest Florida Interagency Fire and Aviation program (SWFLCAR), an interagency partnership between USFWS Zone 6 and Big Cypress National Preserve, the program has collaborated to suppress a total of 42 wildfires; 1,374 acres on FWS lands and 9,398 acres on NPS lands this year. During the FY16 fire season, our staff also provided wildfire suppression support to Merritt Island NWR, A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR, Fakahatchee Strand State Park, Picayune Strand State Forest, Everglades National Park, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Collier-Seminole State Park and Florida Forest Service.

## Fuels Management

Despite our prolonged wet season and wet conditions, our field management completed 27 prescribed fire treatments, 13 on Florida Panther NWR for 6,138 acres, one treatment on J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR for 88 acres and assisted with 13 on Big Cypress Preserve for 32,156 acres this year. With assistance from the National Wild Turkey Federation Grant, three prescribed fires were completed on Florida Panther NWR totaling 1,100 acres and setting a new annual record for acres burned and treated. Additional prescribed fire treatments were planned on Big Pine Key at the National Key Deer Refuge in conjunction with mechanical treatments; however environmental constraints



credit USFWS

prevented the completion of the treatments this fiscal year. Our program completed 955 acres of mechanical treatments across our Zone. Maintenance included mowing of fire lines, Florida Bonneted Bat Roost treatments, and the mechanical reduction of fuels in the Pine Rocklands at National Key Deer.

Zone 6 personnel assisted the following refuges and cooperators with Hazardous Fuels Reduction over the course of the year: J.N. "Ding" Darling and Merritt Island NWRs, Apalachicola National Forest, Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Fakahatchee Strand State Park, Collier-Seminole State Park, Picayune Strand State Forest and Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation.

## Zone Staff Assignments

Our interagency partnership allowed for more flexibility and opportunity for the program. Justin Turnbo did a 120 Zone FMO detail on the Natchez Trace Parkway. Wesley O'Connor assisted refuge operations and as an ICT4 at Malheur NWR. Martin Ramos was on fire assignments as a CRWB in both Washington and California. Greg Suszek was on a fire assignment to California as FOBS(t). We successfully mobilized five Type 2 IA crews for western wildfire support from the Caribbean.

All red-carded personnel received the Annual Fire Refresher (RT-130) training. Additionally, Chainsaw refresher (RT-212), Helicopter Crewmember Refresher (RT-271), Plastic Sphere dispenser Operator Refresher (PLDO), and First Aid/CPR training were offered to personnel in need of those respective refreshers.

Crew Boss -Single Resource (S-230) and Firing Operations (S-219) trainings were hosted by SWFLCAR.

## Of Note

Three SWFLCAR fire staff took part in the South Canyon Staff Ride in Colorado this spring. They brought back some insight on the tragedy, which they developed into a great presentation given at this year's Fire Refresher.

## Honors, Awards, Committees

This year Connor Bowden was recognized by the National Park Service and the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service for responding to a medical emergency with "admirable proficiency, intelligence, and skill." Connor was working with an NPS employee who received a major laceration to his forearm. Connor's quick thinking and ability to stay calm may have saved the NPS employee's life.

## Staffing Changes

None



NPS Firefighters Sam Allen and Matt Mateo protect the boardwalk in the Bailey Tract at J.N. Ding Darling NWR during an 88 acre prescribed fire on June 21 2016; credit USFWS.

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Cass Palmer	FL Cert. Rx Class			
Justin Turnbo		RT130		
Greg Suszek	S400, S244	RT130, PLDO, RT-271	FOBS	
Martin Ramos		RT130, S130/190		
Bobby Schat	FL. Cert. Rx Class	RT130, S219		RXB2
James Padilla		RT130,ATVO, S211, S212, Heavy Equipment		
Ryan McLellan	Engine Academy, S219, S231, S230, S290			
Connor Bowden	Engine Academy, S219, S231, S230, S290			

# Zone 7

## Year Overview

Zone 7 encompasses the National Wildlife Refuges located in southwest Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, with fire staff located at five refuges.

Once again, the year began with a Severity Request in FMO Zone 7. In the late summer and early fall of 2015, the South Arkansas Complex, North Louisiana Complex, Theodore Roosevelt Complex, North Mississippi Complex, and Sam D Hamilton Noxubee NWR entered a period of high fire danger sufficient enough to warrant a severity package. Pocosin Lakes, Alligator River, Mississippi Sandhill Crane, and South Texas Refuge Complex provided suppression resources. Severity conditions ended when the area received approximately four inches of rain over the weekend of October 24 – 25.

This was followed a couple of months later by the largest wildfire in the history of the Gulf Coast Complex, the 4,248 acre Grand Bature Fire on the Mississippi-Alabama state line. The fire started during Valentine's Day weekend and two frontal passages and numerous

wind shifts kept firefighters busy for several days. Zone 7 would like to thank our fellow Zones around the region, who contributed 17 firefighters, four engines and three specialty-tracked vehicles to the suppression effort. Things settled down a bit after this and the Zone ended up with an excellent year of prescribed burning, with 72 burns completed for a total of 44,299 acres.

By late summer, another dry spell was well underway in north Mississippi, and KBDI values throughout the Zone moved over the 600 mark. The 85-acre Starr Fire occurred on the Coldwater River NWR near Grenada, MS in mid-September.

### Wildfire

#### South Arkansas/ North Louisiana Complex

Arkansas and North Louisiana fire management personnel (including militia) responded to four wildfires locally, two wildfires each at Red River and Felsenthal NWRs totaling 6.5 acres.

#### Southwest Louisiana Complex

The majority of the wildfires in SWLA this year occurred in a two week period between July 31 and August 9. One of the

wildfires, the Cottonmouth, was managed as a Type 3 incident. The other nine wildfires were all managed as Type 4/5 incidents. Altogether, the ten wildfires in SWLA totaled 10,295 acres on refuge and another 8,138 acres of threat fires along our boundaries.

#### Southeast Louisiana Complex

Five of the eight wildfires in the Complex occurred in October 2015. The Ellenore Fire on Big Branch Marsh was the largest at 85 acres. The USFWS helicopter, 351 FW, was used to support suppression activity on that fire and the five-acre fire the following day on Bogue Chitto at Lock 1. The Ellenore Fire was a high profile fire from a public perspective for the Refuge and St. Tammany Fire District 3. News media covered the fire as the SE Louisiana area was in a prolonged dry spell. This was also the second of three fires in four days that the refuge responded to.

#### Gulf Coast Complex

The Gulf Coast Complex totaled 12 wildfires on FWS lands that burned 2,219 acres of FWS owned lands with an additional 2,041 acres burning on cooperators' lands. The Grand Bature wildfire in February was the largest fire in the history of the Gulf Coast Complex with support of the suppression effort coming from all around the Southeast Region.

### Fuels Management

#### Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee

The Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR completed 21 prescribed fires for a total of 8,072 acres. Two timber sales were completed for a total of 300 acres, 30 acres of Timber Stand Improvement, 75 acres of chemical spray for invasives, 30 acres of understory spray, and 72 acres of tree planting.

#### South Arkansas/

#### North Louisiana Complex

South Arkansas and North Louisiana Refuge Complex are highly dependent on militia and other refuge staff to accomplish prescribed fire and wildfire management projects. The Holla Bend



Burnout operation in two year rough to catch slop over across Bayou Heron Road just north of the NERR facility during Grand Bature Fire at Grand Bay NWR; credit USFWS/Chris Nothstine.

NWR BlueStem prescribed fire utilized FWS personnel from Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR and The Nature Conservancy; in all, ten firefighters from around the Zone participated. It was the first prescribed burn at that location in 10 years, with the objective to restore warm season grasses.

In all, the prescribed fires on FWS lands in south Arkansas and The North Louisiana Complex totaled 1,345 acres in 10 prescribed fires.

#### Gulf Coast Complex

The Gulf Coast Complex conducted 25 prescribed fires in 2016 totaling 5,669 acres. TNC employees from Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi participated in eleven prescribed fires at the Gulf Coast Complex.

#### Southwest Louisiana Complex

This was a good year for the prescribed fire program in Southwest Louisiana. We managed to treat 27,113 acres of refuge land, which is not unusual for Southwest Louisiana. However, this year most of the burning was done at Lacassine NWR (20,566 acres) and Cameron Prairie NWR (3,495 acres), neither of which has received many prescribed fire treatments in recent history.

### Southeast Louisiana Complex

Prescribed fires were conducted at two of the refuges with the help of The Nature Conservancy, The National Park Service, administrative hires, and fire personnel from all refuges in Zone 7. A total of 2,101 acres were burned at SELA, consisting of 1,493 acres at Big Branch Marsh NWR and 608 acres at Bogue Chitto NWR.

### Zone Staff Assignments

FMO Zone 7 provided responders for 92 assignments off-Zone, for a total 794 days, in the states of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming. Incident types included Wildfires, Hurricanes, Law Enforcement, and Administrative Support.

Lucas Doucet of LA-CPR completed a six-month detail on the Redmond Interagency Hotshot Crew. Jon Westerby of LA-CPR completed a month long detail as an ENGB/ICT5 trainee on a Browns Park NWR Type 6 engine. Jon King completed a 10-month detail as the acting FMO of the Southwest Louisiana NWR Complex.

Matthew Johnson served as Engine Boss, and Chris Foster served as Engine Boss Trainee for two weeks on George Washington/Jefferson National Forest. Ame New served a two week detail to the Arkansas/Oklahoma Interagency Dispatch Center.

Chad Fondren worked on two fires, one in Florida and the other in Virginia, as an Engine Boss. Tristan Luxner, an intern from the refuge, and another crew member from MS Sandhill Crane NWR assisted Chad in Florida. Brad Bradford and Luxner assisted Chad in Virginia.

Paul Reynolds worked with the Blue team as OSC1 in Idaho. Crews from Noxubee NWR assisted the Mississippi Sandhill Crane and Mountain Longleaf NWRs with prescribed burns.

Brad Bailey, Rebecca Goosman, and Chris Nothstine served on the FWS Response to Hurricane Hermine in Florida. Gary Poen and Steven Strader served as Law Enforcement Officers at the Malheur NWR Post-Occupation Support.

### Training

All red-carded personnel attended RT130 refresher trainings.

### Of Note

Notable rainfall events for the area include March 10th and 11th; Felsenthal RAWS station received over 10 inches of rain, while areas of D'Arbonne and Upper Ouachita NWRs received in excess of 20 inches of rain. This event caused flooding over all three refuges that lasted several months, limiting prescribed fire opportunities and causing damage to refuge roads and infrastructure. Sandbags were placed around Black Bayou Lake NWR visitor center; fortunately, water did not enter the structure.

The Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR was busy this year improving RCW habitat, 16 clusters were treated with fire. The fire crew assisted with forestry work on timber sales, timber stand improvement, chemical treatment of invasive species and planting trees. The



Initial attack resources arriving on scene the first day of the Grand Bature Fire at Grand Bay NWR; credit USFWS/Chris Nothstine.

# Zone 7

## continued

fire crew also helped with replacing the water control structure on GTR levee. Nine interns completed basic fire training on the refuge this past year and assisted with RX burns, and one was detailed to two fires.

Scott Saucier coordinated the completion of fireline construction contracts at Grand Bay NWR and Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). Two firelines were completed for a total of 2.5 miles. Construction was financed by FWS Cooperative Agreement Award #F10AC00408 to the NERR.

Private Lands Biologists have been developing their wildland fire qualifications and coordinating with NGOs and State Forestry Commissions to promote prescribed burning on private lands around the Zone. Prescribed Fire Specialist Scott Saucier attended a meeting on this topic with Private Lands Biologists and Regional Fire Management staff in Atlanta. Biologists Brent Harrel, Andy Radomski, Jonathan Baxter, William ‘Russ’ Walsh, and Eric Spadgenske from Zone 7 attended. Radomski and Baxter accepted wildland fire assignments in Utah, Idaho, and California this summer, and Radomski completed a session at the Prescribed Fire Training Center in January.

### SELA Public Outreach

It rained on the day of the annual pack test/wildland refresher. The Castine Center at Pelican Park was contacted, and graciously offered the use of the large indoor facility to conduct the Pack Test. With the last minute change, the Mandeville Fire Department #4 was contacted and they provided EMT service.

The local National Public Radio WWNO sent a reporter to do a story on the prescribed burning that we do. Here is the link to the story: <http://wwno.org/post/burning-forest-trees>

The local NBC news channel covered the large wildfire in Lacombe, LA that the USFWS, Fire District #3, and the LA

Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed
Matthew Johnson		S212		
Nick Wirwa	S212			
Lucas Doucet	S131, S134, S215, L380, Little Bighorn Staff Ride		HEQB, FIRB	FFT1, STOP
Jon Westerby	S215, S260, MOCC, Backhoe, First Responder/EMR		ENGB, HECM	STOP, ICT5, FAL3
Stewart Harrell			FAL3	
Jon King	G-LFML, M581, S300	N9016, A219, S212	ICT3	
Quincy McGee			FAL3	
Chris LeRouge	HEB2, OSHA, PLDO, Hazwoper, Aviation training, ICS400		HEB2	
Glenn Catoe	Heavy Equipment		ENGB, HEQB	FIRB
Greg Lovato	S260			
D. Starkey	S130/190			
Paul Reynolds		S212		
Eddie Harsh			GISS	FIRB, STOP
Brandon Bleiler	S212		STOP	
Steven Lewis			FAL2	
Brad Bradford	S212		STOP	
Chad Fondren			STOP	STOP
William “Russ” Walsh	S190, S130, L180			
Brent Harrel	S211			
Andy Radomski	S211, RT212, M410		FFT1, FAL3	
Glenn Catoe	S211		ENGB, HEQB	FIRB
Brad Bailey	A219	RT130		
James Bates		Heavy Equipment and ATV		
Angela Dedrickson	S131, S133			
Rebecca Goosman	A100	S131, S133		STOP
Ross Ketron			FFT1, ICT5	FAL3
Jay McIlwain	S231	RT212		
Chris Nothstine	A100, A110, A200, A219	S231, RT130, RT212, S131, S133, S211, S212	PLDO, STOP	FEMO, FIRB, HECM
Bert Rager		RT212, Southern Area Heavy Equipment Academy		



*A Marsh Master assisting burnout operations on Bayou Heron Road on the third day of the Grand Bature Fire at Grand Bay NWR; credit USFWS/Chris Nothstine.*

Department of Forestry worked together in suppressing. The link to that story: <http://m.wdsu.com/news/fire-out-smoke-continues-at-scene-of-marsh-fire-in-lacombe/35931512>

Fire staff also assisted the Environmental Education department at SELA with “Refugeology” programs and Spring Camp, Louisiana Master Naturalist program presentations, and a career day at Andrew Jackson Middle School.

### Honors, Awards, Committees

Jon King served on two aviation committees this year. One was a committee tasked with helping to create/test the new AIRS non-fleet invoicing system. The other was a committee that was formed to determine if the FWS wanted to begin using cross-servicing purchase requests in lieu of the IAAs of the recent past.

Zone FMO Sami Gray, Jeff “Bunk” Twiss, and Brad Bailey served on Interagency Fire Danger Operating Plan (FDOP) committees for the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The initial meetings took place in the early part of the year, with follow-up meetings continuing as the plans move closer to implementation.

Sami Gray participated on the planning team for Third Tier Dispatch on the National Forests in Mississippi.

Jeff “Bunk” Twiss was invited by the National Weather Service New Orleans-Baton Rouge Weather Forecast Office to participate in the Weather Ready Nation Ambassador Program.

As the fiscal year came to an end, Prescribed Fire Specialist Scott Saucier was working on a proposal for a Resilient Landscapes grant which will promote prescribed burning in Longleaf Pine habitat throughout Zone 7. The preliminary proposal was accepted during the summer. FWS is the lead agency in the proposal, and is partnering with three Federal agencies, two State agencies, two academic institutions, and seven NGOs.

### Staffing Changes

**SWLA:** Jon King was promoted from Supervisory Technician at SWLA to AFMO/FMO of the refuge complex. Congratulations to Jon on the birth of his son in August!

**SELA:** This Fiscal Year, LA-SER was able to hire a 180 fire position and a Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern. These two positions were

vital to the Complex. These individuals participated in prescribed burning around the Zone, completed trainings, and assisted with wildfire suppression. They also assisted on an engine detail to Virginia.

The heavy equipment operator position was vacated in July, the 180 day position ended in July, and the SCA position ended in May. Currently, only one fire position is filled at the SELA Complex.

**Noxubee:** Hunter Edmundson was hired on the Choctaw NWR as a Bio Tech. Hunter had worked as an intern and Temporary hire on the Sam D Hamilton Noxubee NWR, prior to his permanent appointment. He will still be a valuable asset to our fire program here at the refuge.

**Gulf Coast Complex:** Chris Nothstine, formerly with the National Park Service fire crew at the Natchez Trace Parkway, accepted a Lead Forestry Technician with Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR in February. Chris also completed OSHA-6000 training and serves as the Collateral Duty Training Officer for the Complex.

Former Gopher Frog Recovery Program intern, Ross Ketron, was hired in February as seasonal firefighter, after having served enthusiastically as an A-D firefighter for a year. After his term ended, Ross left in June for a biological technician position at the Audubon Species Survival Center near New Orleans.

**Theodore Roosevelt Complex:** A series of personnel moves has resulted in the formation of an ad-hoc fire crew in the Mississippi Delta. Glenn Catoe is a single resource boss, Gerald Davis is working on an FFT1 taskbook, and Chandler Schmidt and Evan Brashier are FFT2 qualified. Refuge management is supportive of their participation in fire management activities, and Gerald and Evan served on a Type 2 IA crew in California this year.

# Regional Office

## Wildfire

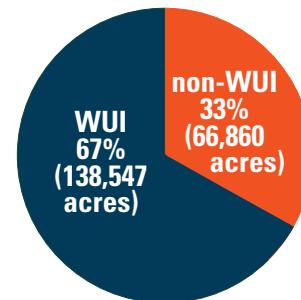
The Southeast Region saw a slight decrease in the number of wildfires, however the number of acres increased. In Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16), FWS Firefighters responded to 141 wildfires which burned 29,374 acres on FWS lands, compared to 151 fires burning 25,157 acres in FY15. All fires were managed in a safe manner with no lost time accidents reported. North Carolina had a Type II incident, but the majority of wildfire activity was centered in Florida. Most of these fires were actively suppressed, but there were cases where local management plans allowed the fires to be managed for resource benefit. Eight wildfires were managed for resource benefit for a total of 4,932 acres. In addition to the regional workload, Southeast Region personnel accepted numerous assignments to assist with the busy fire season in the Pacific Northwest, Northern Rockies and California Geographic Areas.

Long term severity funding (30 days) was requested this year by Zones 1, 6 and 7.

## Burned Area Emergency Response

Two Burned Area Rehabilitation Plans (BAR plans) were approved for funding in FY15 and are ongoing. One BAR plan includes treatments to reforest the native tropical trees burned by the Disaster Fire at Laguna Cartagena NWR (July

## Region 4 Treatment Acres



2015). The second BAR plan includes treatments to detect and eradicate invasive species that occur within the Last Dance Fire area (burned July 2015) on ARM Loxahatchee NWR. Invasive species treated will include Melaleuca and Lygodium. At the end of FY16, two new BAR Plans were submitted for invasive species treatments at Florida Panther and Grand Bay NWRs, both were regionally approved but are currently not funded in FY17. No Emergency Stabilization (ES) plans were submitted in FY16.

## Fuels Management

FY16 funding levels saw a slight increase compared to FY15. Total prescribed fire treatments were much higher than last year, due in part to favorable weather patterns, contributed funds, helicopter

availability and a flexible workforce. This FY's target for treated acres, as determined through the DOI Hazardous Fuels Reduction process, was 68,170 acres and the region accomplished 100% of the target. Additional funds through interior and exterior partnerships were used to help treat an additional 137,243 acres. All of the treatments were accomplished in a safe and efficient manner, reducing hazardous fuel loading and maintaining the health of our fire-dependent landscapes. This year, the Southeast Region treated approximately 138,547 acres of hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface.

The Southeast Region has three positions that work with the U.S. Air Force (USAF) to conduct prescribed fire at numerous USAF installations throughout the region. These employees coordinate detailers to assist with prescribed fire operations. In FY16, over 235 prescribed fires were conducted on USAF lands, totaling over 115,600 acres. This partnership with the USAF has greatly improved our relationship with local cooperators near these installations, as well as providing quality training opportunities for USFWS employees.

The training modules at the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC) successfully completed 18 prescribed fires that treated 19,461

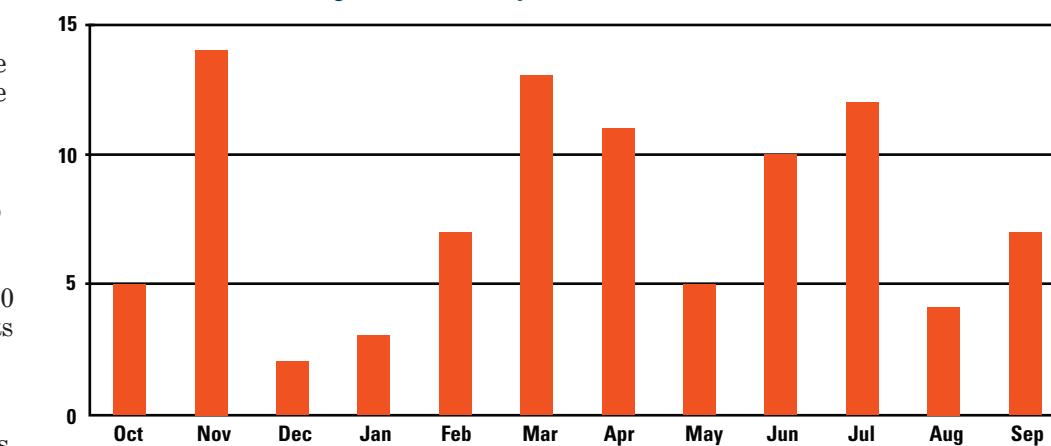
acres, of which 8,567 were in the Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI) zone, on five refuges in the Southeast Region. Attendance from the FWS included: one field coordinator (module leaders), three trainees working on Burn Boss, Firing Boss, and Firefighter 1 qualifications. The Service had nine Line Officers that attended the Prescribed Fire Workshop for Agency Administrators. PFTC continued to supply the interagency community; with 16 burn bosses, 28 of 50 firing bosses, and one of eight fire effects monitors returning to their home unit with recommendations for certification for their positions. These skills were honed on 160 burns totaling 58,627 acres, of which 24,733 acres were in the WUI zone. These burns were conducted in five states on 42 different cooperators' lands, including state, private, and non-governmental organization (NGO) land. Of the burns PFTC students participated in, 82% of the acreage and 43% of the burns were conducted on Federal lands, while 18% of the acres and 57% of the burns were conducted on state, private, or NGO ownerships.

## Training and Qualifications

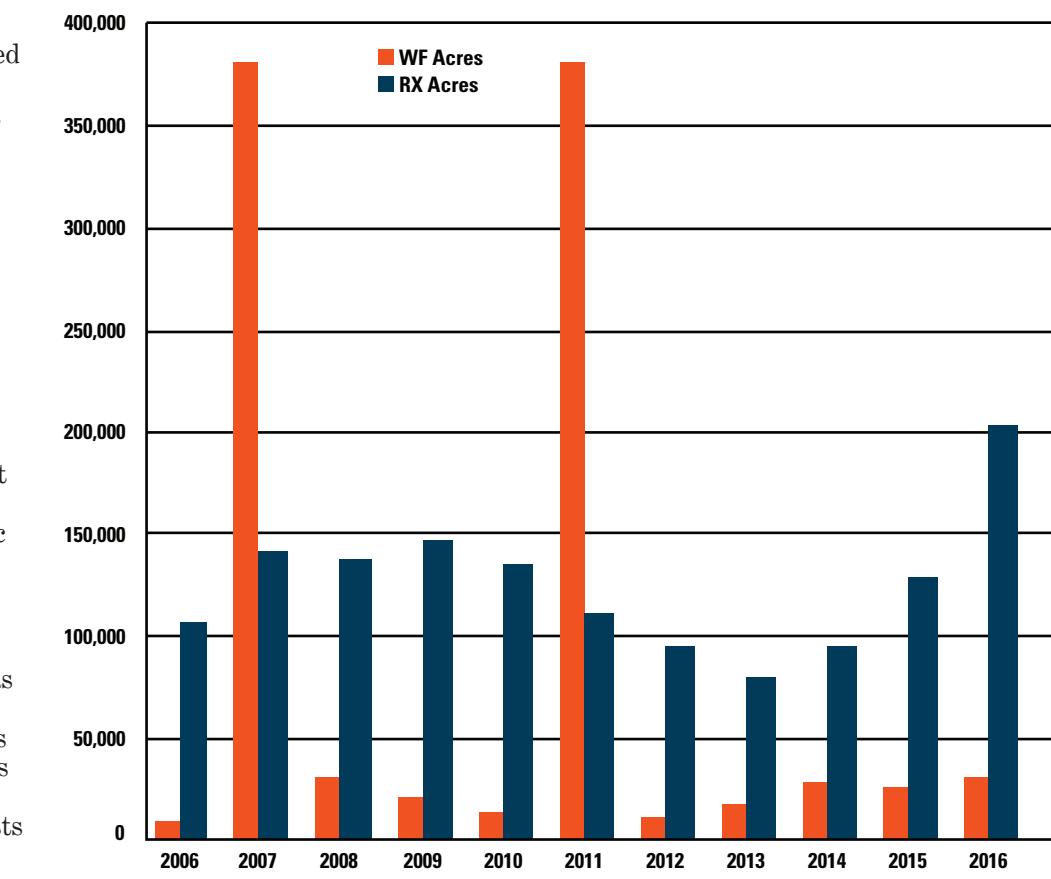
This year approximately sixty-two position task books were completed by service fire personnel in the field and at the regional office.

The interagency priority trainee dispatching process "Priority Trainee List" was continued this year. The effort was expanded to a national effort in 2013. Working cooperatively, geographic area coordination centers have begun sharing priority trainee lists and stepping up efforts to place trainees on fire assignments. The purpose of this process is to better serve the agencies as a more robust trainee prioritization and rotation system. Although the process is still being honed, the number of trainees placed on assignment, coupled with the volume of completed task books, suggests the process is shaping up to be an efficient dispatching tool.

## Region 4 Wildfire Starts FY 2016



## Region 4 Wildfire and Treatment Acres FY 2006-2016



Employee	Training Taken	Instructor Experience	Taskbooks Initiated	Taskbooks Completed	Assignment/State
Josh O'Connor	S420/L481	UGA Marchmester	SOPL		DIVS/CA
Jon Wallace					OSC2/ID
Vince Carver			SITL		SITL/CA
Kim Eldridge	S190, IS700a				
Sue Wilder	S420/L481, IS400		PSC3		RESL/M, ID, and AL
Mike Dueitt		PFTC, Chickamauga and Vicksburg Staff Rides, L-481 Intent to Action			ICT1/VA
Rick Struhar	S481, Basic Financial Assistance Training. (BFA FAPO)		INBA		

# Regional Office

*continued*

Notable is our involvement in the Tennessee/Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy. This year was the 14th annual session. Mike Housh has served on the steering committee as the FWS representative since the academy's inception. This year FWS sponsored and delivered S-230, Crew Boss (Single Resource) and S-330 Strike Team / Task Force Leader with the help of Paul Ryan and Jon Wallace. Twenty-three FWS firefighters attended the academy as students this year.

## All Hazard

The Region was fortunate to make it through another hurricane season without any major storms making landfall. In early September, Hurricane Hermine impacted several refuges in Florida. A small team was deployed to assist with cleanup efforts at Crystal River NWR.

## Planning

The Southeast Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has seventy-one field units requiring Fire Management Plans (FMP). These are maintained in a database at the regional office. Field units are responsible for performing annual FMP reviews and providing updates as necessary.

## Cooperative Relationships

A database for statewide master fire agreements with the ten southeastern states and Puerto Rico is maintained annually. The Agreement with Puerto Rico was renewed this year.

R4 Fire initiated two agreements this fiscal year with Tall Timbers Research Station. A grant agreement for the purpose of allowing them to utilize one of our Type 6 fire engines and a cooperative agreement to partner in efforts to train private landholders in the planning and implementation of prescribed fire on their lands adjacent to ours.

We entered into two agreements with the Nature Conservancy (TNC) this fiscal year. A grant agreement to allow them to utilize one of our burn trailers, and

## Fire Reports for FY 2016

Refuge	Number of Treatments	Treatment Acres	Number of Wildfires	Wildfires Acres
Alligator River NWR	3	424.7	7	7,727.7
ARM Loxahatchee NWR	2	36,812.0	1	5
Bayou Savage NWR			1	0.2
Big Branch Marsh NWR	9	1,538.7	1	86.6
Black Bayou Lake NWR	1	2.0		
Bogue Chitto NWR	4	606.9		
Bon Secour NWR			1	0.7
Cabo Rojo NWR	2	156.8	4	18.4
Cahaba River NWR	7	1,119.4		
Cameron Prairie NWR	2	3,884.4	1	0.1
Carolina Sandhills NWR	40	11,613.1		
Cedar Island NWR			2	23.9
Cedar Keys NWR			1	0.1
Chassahowitzka NWR	1	30.0		
Coldwater River NWR			1	85.0
D'Arbonne NWR	1	142.6		
Egmont Key NWR			1	79.0
Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin NWR	7	1,777.7		
Eufaula NWR	2	959.0		
Felsenthal NWR	5	871.1	2	0.2
Florida Panther NWR	17	6,479.0	4	1,308.4
Grand Bay NWR	2	450.2	7	2,207.1
Holla Bend NWR	1	138.5		
J.N. Ding Darling NWR	7	175.8		
Key Cave NWR	2	200.2	1	4.0
Lacassine NWR	8	20,558.5		
Laguna Cartagena NWR	4	271.8	1	22.2
Lake Woodruff NWR	21	8,051.2		
Lower Suwannee NWR	18	5,060.2	4	1.5
Mackay Island NWR	3	629.4	1	0.2
Merritt Island NWR	17	18,250.1	12	132.3
Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR	36	5,935.5	24	13.1

Refuge	Number of Treatments	Treatment Acres	Number of Wildfires	Wildfires Acres
Mountain Longleaf NWR	4	2,886.2		
National Key Deer NWR	4	88.1	2	3.1
Okefenokee NWR	24	8,996.9	9	296.1
Overflow NWR	1	55.1		
Pea Island NWR	1	59.0		
Pee Dee NWR	9	1,423.0		
Piedmont NWR	28	12,783.0	4	8.3
Pinckney Island NWR	1	210.0		
Pocosin Lakes NWR	1	309.0		
Red River NWR	1	135.2	2	6.3
Sabine NWR	4	3,052.0	9	10,293.5
Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee NWR	23	7,981.0		
Santee NWR	2	474.0		
Savannah NWR	5	1,408.0		
St. Johns NWR	1	154.8	9	882.0
St. Marks NWR	58	33,933.3	4	
St. Vincent NWR	9	5,509.1		
Ten Thousand Islands NWR	2	10.0		
Vieques NWR			24	21.3
Wassaw NWR			1	0.3
Wheeler NWR			1	0.1
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>29,381.7</b>

another grant agreement to facilitate rangewide Longleaf Pine conservation efforts utilizing DOI Resilient Landscapes funding.

We also entered into an Intra-Agency Agreement (IAA) with the Southeast Region of the National Park Service to facilitate cooperative prescribed burning efforts throughout the region.

## Preparedness

In 2014 the R4 Fire Management Program implemented a system of

certifying Annual Preparedness Reviews at stations receiving preparedness funding. This year, all 20 of the 20 stations receiving preparedness funds have participated, which translates to a 100% compliance rate.

## Fire Ecology

Fire atlas projects were completed following the USGS Fire Atlas Project Protocols. Fire Atlas products were completed for Merritt Island and St John's River NWRs (October 2015), Alligator River NWR (March 2016),

Pocosin Lakes NWR (April 2016), Okefenokee NWR (September 2016). In addition, Carolina Sandhills, ARM Loxahatchee, National Key Deer, Vieques and Cabo Rojo NWRs are underway in FY 2016 with an expected completion date in early FY17 (October 2016). All final GIS layers have been provided to the refuges for archiving and application. Previously developed fire atlases for southeast region refuges include Big Branch Marsh and St Marks NWRs (FY 2012).

## Budget

The Region saw a slight increase in FY16 funding compared to FY15. Salaries still comprise greater than 75% of the budget, and Management Considerations may be tighter in FY17. Previous fiscal year planning allowed the Region to replace fire equipment that was the highest priority in need of replacement. The Region as a whole is still being encouraged to implement cost saving measures and prepare for potential future budget reductions.

## Of Note

Josh O'Connor assisted R1 (Northwest) during the Malheur Occupation.

Kevin Scasny continues to work with the contractor and administrators to implement transition to the NIFC (National Interagency Fire Center) web server.

## Honors, Awards, Committees

Josh O'Connor served as the Chair of the USFWS National Fuels Working Team.

Rick Struhar serves on the Southern Area Training Working Team, the combined Eastern Area / Southern Area Incident Business Management Workshop Committee, The FWS National Fire Business Task Group, and served as chair for the FWS National Fire Operations Safety Team (NFOST).

## Staffing Changes

Southern Area Assistant Coordinator Pat Boucher retired in September.

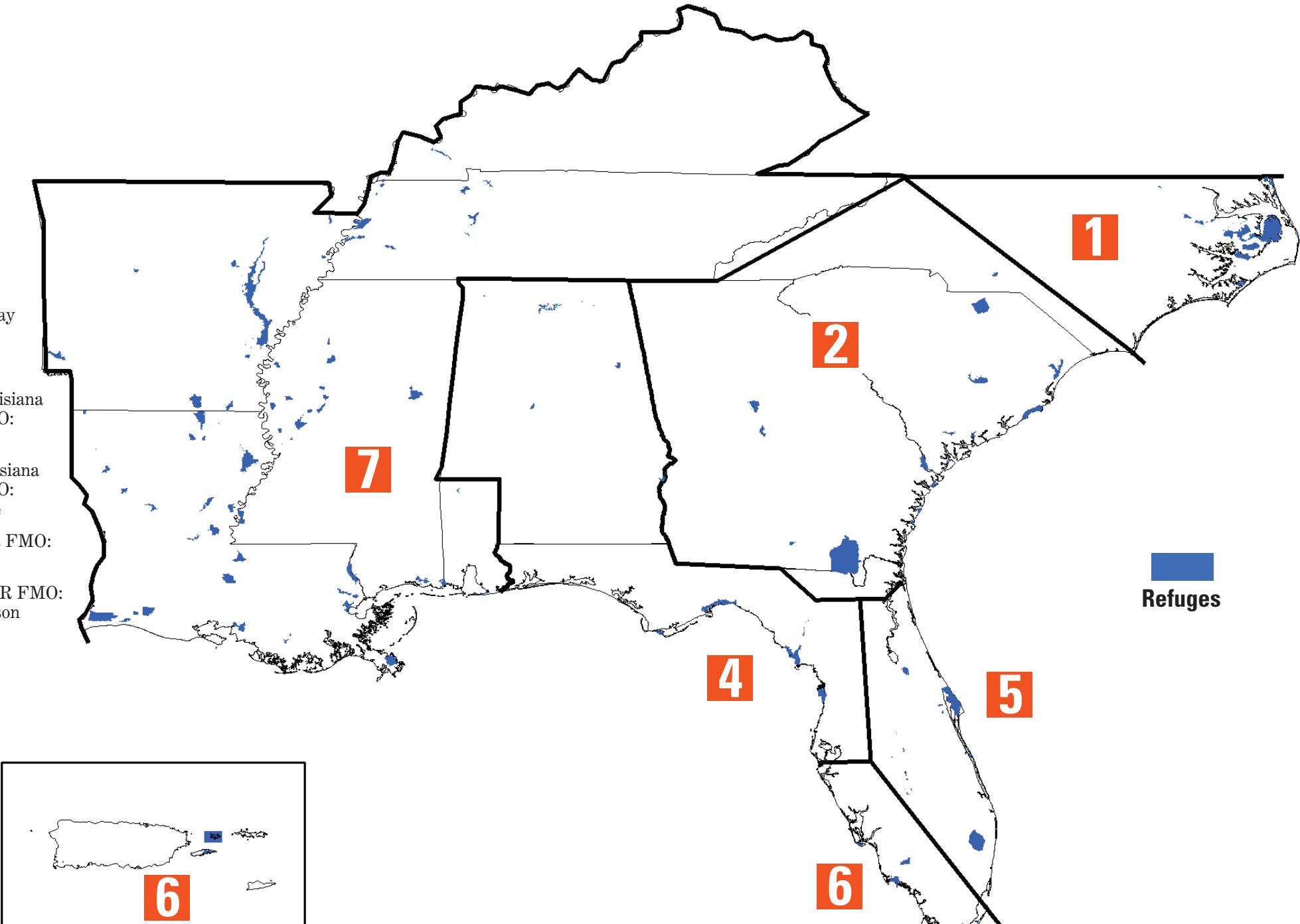
## Southeast Region Fire Management Districts

**Southeast Regional Fire Office (Atlanta)**  
Regional Fire Management Coordinator:  
Vince Carver  
  
Deputy Regional Fire Management  
Coordinator: Jon Wallace  
  
Regional Prescribed Fire Coordinator:  
Josh O'Connor  
  
Regional Fire Manager Specialist:  
Rick Struhar  
  
Regional Fire Geographer: Kim Eldridge

Regional Fire Office Assistant:  
Margaret Hale  
  
**Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC)**  
SACC Assistant Coordinator: Vacant  
  
SACC Meteorologist: Kevin Seasnay  
  
**Tallahassee Regional Fire Office (TLH)**  
Prescribed Fire Training Center  
Director: Mike Dueitt  
  
**Slidell Regional Fire Staff (SLI)**  
Regional Fire Ecologist: Sue Wilder

**Southeast Region Fire Management Zones**  
**Fire Zone 1**  
FMO: Bert Plante  
Alligator River NWR Fire Ops  
Specialist: Donnie Harris  
  
Pocosin Lakes NWR Refuge FMO:  
Gregg Buckalew  
  
**Fire Zone 2**  
FMO: Rob Wood  
Zone PFS: Greg Askins  
Carolina Sandhills NWR Refuge FMO:  
Mark Parker  
Okefenokee NWR FMO: Reese Kerbow  
Okefenokee NWR AFMO: Reggie Forcine  
Piedmont NWR PFS: John Mason  
  
**Fire Zone 4**  
FMO: Greg Titus  
St. Marks NWR AFMO: Josh Havird  
Lower Suwannee NWR Refuge FMO:  
Victor Doig  
  
**Fire Zone 5**  
FMO: Patrick Pearson  
Merritt Island NWR PFS (MIR):  
Michael Good  
Merritt Island NWR Fire Ops Specialist:  
Ryan Sharpe  
ARM Loxahatchee NWR FMO (LXR):  
Tom Ledbetter  
  
**Fire Zone 6**  
FMO: Cass Palmer  
Florida Panther NWR AFMO: Vacant  
PFS (FPR): Greg Suszek  
Caribbean Islands NWR: James Padilla

**Fire Zone 7**  
FMO: Sami Gray  
District PFS:  
Scott Saucier  
Southwest Louisiana  
Complex AFMO:  
Jon King  
Southeast Louisiana  
Complex AFMO:  
Chris LeRouge  
Noxubee NWR FMO:  
Paul Reynolds  
Felsenthal NWR FMO:  
Matthew Johnson



**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Division of Fire Management**  
**1875 Century Boulevard**  
**Atlanta, GA 30345**  
<http://www.fws.gov/southeastfire>  
<http://twitter.com/USFWSEFireSE>  
January 2017



## Keeping Fire on Our Side

*For thousands of years, humans have had an active partnership with fire. When respected and managed with care, fire can be a beneficial ally rather than an awesome opponent. Thoughtful preparation and action by public managers and private property owners can help keep fire's effects positive. Together, we can keep fire on our side.*

