

# SOUTHWEST FIRE SCIENCE CONSORTIUM NEWSLETTER

## Spring 2010



### GREETINGS FROM THE CONSORTIUM!

We have great news to share with everyone. The Southwest Fire Science Consortium proposal has been approved by the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP). The funding cycle commences June 1, 2010.

Now that funding has been secured we have quite a bit of work ahead of us. We are in the process of hiring a Consortium coordinator and filling out the executive board. We also need volunteers from all the Consortium partners to sit on the review committee. The review committee will help direct the Consortium by identifying topics for workshops, webinars, and field trips. Interested individuals should contact us at [swfireconsortium@gmail.com](mailto:swfireconsortium@gmail.com).

We plan to develop 2 to 3 workshops and field trips per year. The workshops will target specific topics identified under information needs and may focus on sub-regions within the Consortium. Instead of creating a new website with similar resources, we will be working with FRAMES to continue to develop a portal for the SW Fire Science Consortium. The FRAMES portal will contain: (1) links to popular existing sites, (2) general Consortium announcements, (3) synthesis of research products, (4) a Consortium newsletter, and (5) the latest fire research announcements.



The proposal that outlines what the consortium plans to do is available [online](http://www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/SW_Consortium_proposal.pdf) at: [www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/SW\\_Consortium\\_proposal.pdf](http://www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/SW_Consortium_proposal.pdf)

### MASTICATION WEBINAR

On March 3, the Southwest Fire Science Consortium hosted a webinar on mastication as a forest fuel reduction treatment. We had an overwhelming response by participants for this webinar. We had 50 slots available for this presentation and would like to apologize to those of you that were not able to attend. We will make improvements in the system before our next webinar.



Dr. Mike Battaglia from the US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station presented results from lodgepole pine, mixed conifer, ponderosa pine, and piñon-juniper ecosystems. These chipping or grinding treatments added a substantial amount of 1-hr and 10-hr woody fuel and large input of nitrogen to the forest floor. However, because of the high carbon to nitrogen ratio of the masticated material, much of the added nitrogen is unavailable to plants. In general, the study found few short-term negative ecological effects on plant communities and soil processes, but chip depths greater than 3 inches depressed herbaceous plant cover and nitrogen availability in lodgepole pine and piñon-juniper ecosystems. Perhaps most importantly, the study demonstrated that ecosystem response varies across ecosystems and more research is needed to understand long-term consequences of these treatments.

The power point from the webinar is online: [www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/Battaglia\\_SW\\_Fire\\_Consortium\\_Mastication.pdf](http://www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/Battaglia_SW_Fire_Consortium_Mastication.pdf) and the project report is available at: [www.firescience.gov/projects/06-3-2-26/project/06-3-2-26\\_jfsp\\_06-3-2-26\\_mastication\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.firescience.gov/projects/06-3-2-26/project/06-3-2-26_jfsp_06-3-2-26_mastication_final_report.pdf)

## FUTURE FIRE PROFESSIONALS

We have been able to start working on the future fire professional's piece of the Consortium by hiring a part time coordinator.

Hello everyone! My name is Erin Saunders and I am the new Fire Program and Diversity Coordinator at the School of Forestry at Northern Arizona University (NAU) in Flagstaff, Arizona. I graduated from the School of Forestry at NAU with a Bachelors of Science in Forestry in May of 2009. Since then I have worked as a Camp Counselor for the Centennial Forest in Flagstaff and then backpacked throughout Europe for 3 months. In returning from my adventures, Andi Thode (Assistant Professor, School of Forestry, NAU) offered me a temporary position as the Fire Program and Diversity Coordinator to pilot and create a few projects that would benefit the Development of Future Fire Professionals. Currently, there are many diverse projects that I am working on. A few examples include:

- **Wildland Fire Degree** – I am currently working with a diverse group of people in developing a Wildland Fire degree to be housed at NAU. This will entail an assorted set of Fire Ecology and Wildland Fire classes. Also, it will hopefully entail a mandatory extended summer for our fire students so they will get a full season of fire under their belt (May through October). This projects ultimate goal is to create a curriculum and set of standards that is transferable to other institutions who are hoping to develop similar programs.
- **2+2 Agreements with Community Colleges** – While I am working on developing a Wildland Fire degree at NAU I am also trying to create 2+2 Agreements with Community Colleges so as to create a smooth transition from their institution to NAU. This would also include the extended summer as part of the program. This simple transition will hopefully eliminate the “I can't afford to go to college” attitude that many under privileged communities tend to hold. Many of the agreements will incorporate the

STEP and SCEP program within the USFS to help reduce costs of attending a university.

- **USFS Regional Civil Rights Committee (RCRC)** – I am working with the RCRC, the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA), and the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) to recruit NM and AZ High School students into the USFS and Wildland Fire Program. The goal of the project is to increase diversity (Native America, Hispanic, and women) in the USFS and NAU.
- **High School/Camp Wildland Fire Curriculum** – I am working with Emily Rowland (a current student in our Forestry program) in developing a Wildland Fire curriculum for the Centennial Forest Environmental Education Programs (ages 14-16) that could also be utilized as a High School (ages 16-18) recruitment tool. We are hoping to do a test run of this project at the upcoming Environmental Education Programs this summer. The goal of this project is to educate high school students about Wildland Fire, inform them of the career opportunities in Wildland Fire and how NAU can help them achieve those goals.

There are many more projects that I am working on but I feel these are the most pertinent and at the top of my list. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or would like to help please feel free to contact me at [erin.saunders@nau.edu](mailto:erin.saunders@nau.edu) or (928) 523-4479.



## Fire Manager Questionnaire

Some of you will remember the fire manager survey we conducted online and in-person to fire managers throughout the southwest for inclusion in the JFSP proposal. Thanks to all of you that participated. Following is a summary of those results. The entire write up of the results by Donna Peppin is [online](http://www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/SWFSC_Annotated_Questionnaire.pdf) at: [http://www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/SWFSC\\_Annotated\\_Questionnaire.pdf](http://www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium/SWFSC_Annotated_Questionnaire.pdf)

The survey was conducted to help determine: 1) the adequacy of information currently available to fire managers, 2) what are the information and research needs of fire managers, 3) what is needed to address key gaps in information and research needs. A total of 84 questionnaires were completed with regional and local fire managers. The majority of respondents (87%) agreed that the information currently available to implement management actions on the ground which meets the objectives of their particular unit is "very sufficient" (19%) to "somewhat sufficient" (68%). As with the information currently available, the majority of respondents (55%) found that the current level of information sharing is "somewhat sufficient;" however, approximately two in seven (29%) said that this level of information sharing is currently "not very sufficient." According to respondents, availability of information via the internet has been important in effectively obtaining and sharing information; however, developing a searchable "data clearinghouse" website and increasing collaboration with agencies at all levels could improve dissemination of critical fire information. Almost 60% of respondents claimed the level of collaboration with other agencies or organization in obtaining critical fire science information is "somewhat effective" followed by approximately two in nine (22%) stating that this level of collaboration for obtaining fire information was "not very sufficient." Good interagency working relationships and communication was stated as the number one effort making the level of collaboration successful.

For those respondents answering in the "not very sufficient" and "not at all sufficient" answer categories, collaboration or partnerships could be more effective by better communication across agencies.

When asked what research currently has the highest priority within the unit for which they worked, many research topics were identified; however, the top areas of research of highest priority included threatened and endangered species, invasive species, ecosystem restoration, and safety. Additionally, multiple topics specific to fire (e.g. fuels, behavior, effects) were also important but of lower priority. Outside of agency priorities for research, respondents identified fire behavior and effects, fire safety, and fuels treatments and management as the top three research priorities, if given a choice. Interestingly, not too far behind, was the importance of research on invasive species, ecosystem restoration, smoke management and effects, and fuels classification.

From the responses to the questionnaire it appears that fire science information is available primarily via the internet; however, a more effective method of dissemination of the information available is needed. Developing a searchable "data clearinghouse" website for fire information could meet this need. In addition, improving or maintaining interagency communication and partnering will be important for effective dissemination and acquisition of fire science information. In regards to needed research, it appears that there is a disconnect between needs of agencies as a whole and what fire managers find to be important. Better communication at all agencies levels is needed to come to agreement on research priorities.



More Consortium information is available at: [www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium.html](http://www.forestguild.org/SWconsortium.html) as we transition to our new home at: [frames.nbii.gov/southwest/consortium](http://frames.nbii.gov/southwest/consortium)