



The 2007 Fire Season in Review



NPS photo by J. Ziegler

The Willow Fire as seen by aerial reconnaissance on July 22, 2007

The parks were prepared for an active fire year in 2007. Snowpack and precipitation was approximately one-third of average and a warm spring melted that snowpack early. Fire managers instituted fire restrictions in mid-June. However, the number of fire ignitions, either human-caused or lightning strikes, was unusually low.

This was one of the quieter fire seasons on record for Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks. Lightning fires that were managed for ecological benefit plus prescribed fires and suppression fires amounted to 668 acres. The majority of the lightning ignitions occurred east of the Sierra Nevada

and contributed to a demanding fire season in the Great Basin and the Rockies. A variety of factors, including the early arrival of dry conditions, led to a very short window for prescribed fires in the spring. The need for park fire resources to assist in southern California this fall also limited our ability to complete some fall projects.

While it was a slow fire season in the parks, our fire personnel were busy assisting on other wildland fires throughout the west, including Southern California and the Great Basin. This sharing of fire resources helps ensure that resources are available to the parks when we need assistance.

How unusual was this year?

Actually, it wasn't. It was one of the slower fire seasons in the parks since managers started using prescribed fire and wildland fire use. There were few lightning-ignited fires—a periodically natural occurrence.

During the suppression years (prior to 1968), there were many

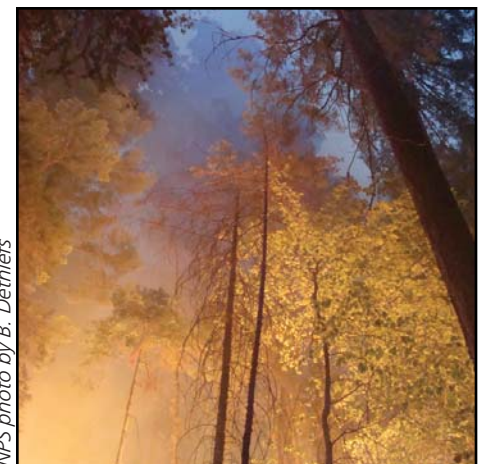
"In general the fire did some good in that it has reduced the fire hazard on the west park boundary for a number of years, particularly in the great accumulation of brushland debris on the steep slopes approaching the Muir Grove. It was inevitable that this area should burn at some time, and the longer the fire was deferred the more serious the eventual conflagration."

Superintendent John R. White, in his report to the National Park Service Director regarding the 1926 Kaweah Fire.

years in which few burned acres were recorded. This may be due to gaps in reporting, particularly during the WWII years. None the less, there is little doubt that suppression policies were somewhat successful. What is interesting to note is that some of the largest wildland fires the area experienced happened periodically even in the suppression years. The Kaweah Fire of 1926 started near Badger and burned 68,932 acres outside of the park and 11,707 acres in what was then the park (remember that much of Kings Canyon National Park was not National Park Service land at the time). The park's cost alone was almost \$20,000. Large fires occurred in 1948 and 1960, as well.



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Fire Season Highlights 2007

June

Ash Mountain Prescribed Fire, various locations and dates.

July

The Willow Fire discovered. It had moderate potential for growth, but rains stalled its growth at 194 acres.

Wilsonia/Pine Camp Mechanical Thinning Project completed. 25 acres.

August

Beetle Rock Mechanical Thinning Project completed. 15 acres.

September

Wallspring Prescribed Fire ignited over three days. 175 acres.

October

Valley View Prescribed Fire ignited over three days. 226 acres.

Baldy Ridge Fire started by lightning. 20 acres.

Comments or Questions? ***Do you want to be added to the parks' fire information email list? Please contact:***

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NPS photo by A. Deming

Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks Help Out Responding Unit Out of Park Assignments & Highlights

Arrowhead Hotshot Crew	15 assignments. 3 rotations on the <i>Zaca Fire</i> near Santa Barbara, the <i>Moonlight Fire</i> on the Plumas National Forest, and the <i>Santiago Fire</i> in San Diego County
Engine 72	11 assignments including the <i>Zaca Fire</i>
Engine 51	18 assignments. The <i>Sawtooth Fire</i> in Idaho and the <i>Slide Fire</i> in San Bernardino County
Crew 91	14 assignments including the <i>Trapper Ridge Fire</i> (Idaho), the <i>Conger Creek Fire</i> (Montana), and incidents in Yosemite.
Helicopter 552 & Helitack Crew	16 assignments. Multiple local assignments on the Sequoia and Sierra national forests, search and rescues in Yosemite, the <i>Yokohl Fire</i> , and the <i>Inyo Fire</i> .
Fire Monitors	10 assignments including the <i>Trapper Ridge Fire</i> and the <i>Conger Creek Fire</i>