



Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks

Arrowhead Interagency Hotshots Celebrate 30 Years of Service

In 1981, the National Park Service decided to organize several wildland fire suppression crews (later to be referred to as “hotshots”). The NPS largely depended on loosely organized local crews or other agencies to respond to fires on their lands. The agency decided that they needed to have their own fire crews ready for and to develop the expertise for fire response.

One of the first of the NPS hotshot crews was established in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Crews were also established in Rocky Mountain National Park (the current Alpine Hotshots) and in Yellowstone (the now disbanded Bison Hotshots). Initially, all three crews were called Arrowhead Crews 1, 2, and 3; so named to honor the NPS arrowhead shield seen on uniforms and signs. The Arrowhead Hotshots name remains with the Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks crew today.


The obstacles for the crew’s formation were numerous. The first Arrowhead Hotshots camped in tents while they built their barracks at the Swale Work Center. The US Forest Service was pressuring the NPS to be more involved and to shoulder more of the responsibility for fire response. However, the NPS crews needed to prove themselves to their interagency firefighting peers. After all, hotshot crews are often referred to “elite” firefighters, expected to meet exacting skill and fitness standards. For the Arrowheads, several tough assignments helped quiet that concern.

Today, the Arrowhead Hotshots are one of 110 hotshot crews in the nation and are available as initial response for fires throughout federal lands. They meet the interagency standards as a Type 1 hotshot crew.

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Arrowhead Hotshots over the years: 1982, 2003, 2011(photo by Andrea Zelcer), and current Arrowhead Superintendent John Goss discussing the day’s plan on the Lion Fire, 2011.



Reflecting on thirty years of service, the formation of the hotshot crews for the NPS have had significant impacts on NPS fire management beyond the initial response that these crews provide. The hotshot model helped formalize NPS fire response within the agency and without. It has broadened the NPS perspective on fire management by responding to fires for different agencies, within different fuel types, and in a range of environments such as complex wildland urban interfaces. It has provided training opportunities for firefighters throughout the parks and has helped develop generations of leaders within fire management in the NPS.

“It is a great honor for me to run this crew,” said John Goss, Arrowhead Superintendent. “I follow in the steps of the incredible leaders who instilled pride, safety, and teamwork into the foundation of the crew. I work hard to ensure that the Arrowheads continue to be respected in the firefighting community.”

For more information about the Arrowhead Hotshots, please visit
<http://www.arrowheadhotshots.org/>

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