National Park Service
Department of the Interior

Grand Teton National Park

PO Box 170
Moose, WY 83012

307 739-3311 phone
307 739-3325 fax

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Grand Teton National Park Fire Management: Fire Ecology Workshop

Local educators and interagency personnel participated in the first area Project Learning Tree Fire Ecology Workshop this month, learning about the role of fire in ecosystems and the use of fire to manage natural areas.

Led by the Project Learning Tree state coordinator and Grand Teton National Park's fire education specialist, workshop participants were first presented fire ecology material from Project Learning Tree's *The Changing Forest: Forest Ecology* guide. Each person attending the workshop received a copy of the activity book, filled with interdisciplinary lessons that allow students to examine ecological systems of a forest, analyze interdependencies within a forest ecosystem, and explore factors that shape the development of forests. Each of the module's activities has been correlated with Wyoming's state teaching standards.

The workshop then focused on *Burning Issues,* an interactive CD-ROM developed by the Bureau of Land Management and Florida State University. The CD guided participants through four ecosystems, using an interactive field notebook to teach about the natural history of the plants and animals along with their interrelationships with fire. The Burning Issues CD also presented lessons about prescribed fire, wildland fire suppression, the relationship between fire and invasive plant species, and constructing "firewise" homes. The CD's culminating activity required participants to put what they had learned to work when they found themselves in the Fire Command Center and a wildland fire was reported. Each workshop attendee received six copies of the CD. A curriculum guide for both teachers and students is included in the program.

The workshop gave teachers and natural resource agency personnel an opportunity to obtain material and form partnerships for teaching fire ecology lessons. Participants in the workshop included staff from:

- Teton County School District
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department
- Bridger-Teton National Forest
- Wilson Volunteer Fire Department
- National Elk Refuge
- Fossil Butte National Monument
- Grand Teton National Park

For more information about the Project Learning Tree program, visit **www.plt.org**. Copies of the Burning Issues CD can be purchased from the National Symbols Catalog at **www.symbols.gov.**