



January 22, 2014

## Tom Nichols to Retire

Tom Nichols, Chief of Fire and Aviation Management for the National Park Service at the Fire Management Program Center in Boise, Idaho, will conclude a 37-year career on January 31, 2014. “In addition to building on success at every level during his nearly 40-year career, Tom’s exceptional leadership and talents have truly helped the NPS fire and aviation program rise to new levels. I especially want to thank Tom for his recent work in leading the division through one of the toughest financial periods in the history of the NPS fire program. His vision, focus, and collaborative style helped put the division back on a positive course which will carry long into the future,” said Cam Sholly, Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection.

Tom began working for the National Park Service in 1977 as a seasonal fire effects monitor in the Division of Natural Resource Management in Sequoia and Kings Canyon Parks. In 1979, he accepted a permanent position there, and over the next fifteen years was engaged in many new programs which are standard practices today, including the creation of the original Prescribed Burn Boss course and task book certification process, the first NPS fuels management crew, the development of smoke monitoring methodologies and prescriptions, and the Fire Monitoring and Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation manuals. Following the 1988 Yellowstone area fires, he co-authored the Environmental Assessment which was used as a model by many parks to get their fire management programs back on-line.

In 1992, Tom moved to the old Western Region as the regional prescribed fire specialist, and in 2000 became the Pacific West Region Fire Management Officer. During this period, Tom worked to build stronger relationships between fire management and its agency and interagency partners. As an example, in 2002 he received the Crystal Owl Team Award from Harpers Ferry for assisting in the development and implementation of a joint prescribed fire training course for cultural and fire management staffs.

In 2001, Tom received a Superior Service award, in part for rebuilding the region’s fire management program following the Servicewide prescribed fire moratorium as a result of the Cerro Grande fire in Bandelier National Monument. In 2002, Tom was honored to be selected as the fire management officer for Yosemite National Park and happy to be back in the field.

In 2005, Tom was selected as the deputy budget and planning program lead for the Fire Management Program Center, and in 2007 moved into his current position, managing the wildland fire, structural fire, and aviation management programs and the associated information technology, administration, and communication/education branches.



*Tom Nichols concludes his 37-year National Park Service career at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.*

“I’ve been very privileged to have worked with so many wonderful people. Wildland fire, aviation, and structural fire management touch so many places and involve so many disciplines that my career has been full of challenges that were almost always a great pleasure with which to work. I have fond memories of many good friends I made along the way.”

Tom and his wife, Barbara, are planning to move back to the Sierra Nevada where they can explore the mountains and Tom can write letters to superintendents to complain about smoke from their prescribed fires. Tom may be contacted at [tomfire19@aol.com](mailto:tomfire19@aol.com).