



# Open Understory

## First Burn in 20 Years at Cape Hatteras



Above: The Bodie island Lighthouse seen through smoke and fire during the Bodie Island Burn. NPS Photo / Ray Matthews.

*Bodie Island, NC*--On February 3 and 7, 2012, firefighters from the Cumberland Gap Wildland Fire Module, Natchez Trace, Everglades, Little River Canyon and Big South Fork assisted staff at Cape Hatteras National Seashore to burn approximately 1,300 acres on Bodie Island. Supported by numerous federal, state, and local cooperators, including US Fish and Wildlife Service, NC Highway Patrol, and Dare County Sheriff Department, the burn was completed safely without control problems or smoke issues. The burn's objective was to restore native plant communities. This was the Seashore's first prescribed burn since 1992.

### From My Corner: **Shawn Bengé, Deputy Regional Director for Operations**

I would like to highlight one of the SER's most successful programs--wildland fire and aviation management. Each year, SER accounts for half of all the acres treated with prescribed fire across the entire National Park Service. Our parks also experience a high number of unplanned ignitions, which can develop into complex, long-term incidents. **I urge all superintendents and chief rangers from parks with burnable vegetation to join me in attending the Local Fire Management Leadership course, June 4-8, in Jacksonville, FL. The first five superintendents to e-mail [samuel\\_larry@nps.gov](mailto:samuel_larry@nps.gov) with a commitment will receive \$700 toward their travel costs from the regional fire program.**

## Cumberland Island Fights Region's First Wildfire of 2012

*St. Marys, GA*--On January 4, 2012, Cumberland Island National Seashore firefighters responded to a 45-acre human-caused wildfire. Firefighters completed hand line around the fire on January 6 and continued to monitor until it was declared out. Willow Pond Trail and Hickory Hill Campground were closed until January 27, but the managed hunt was not affected.

Below: NPS firefighters were assisted by Camden County Fire and Rescue, Georgia Forestry Commission, and PatRick, a contract hand crew.



## UPCOMING MEETINGS AND TRAINING

**May 14-25: Arkansas Wildland Fire Academy** (Russellville, AR): <http://bit.ly/wqjloda>

**May 29-31: NPS Southeast Regional FMO Meeting and Training Workshop** (Atlanta, GA)

**June 4-8: Local Fire Management Leadership** (Jacksonville, FL)

For a complete list, check our SharePoint site at  
<http://bit.ly/bYeP1L>

## Make Way for “The Getter!”

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL FIRE PROGRAM ADDS NEW TRACKED LOADER TO FUELS MANAGEMENT TOOLBOX

Atlanta, GA--Before an area can be burned safely, firefighters must make a line around its edge where the vegetation has been reduced, so the fire cannot spread too far. Some park areas near roads and houses cannot be burned at all because the risk to property is too high. A new piece of equipment, dubbed “The Getter,” is making the tasks of fireline construction and “me-



chanical fuel treatments” easier for SER firefighters. So far, the Getter has treated over 50 acres at COWP, CAHA, KEMO and BISO. To find out how the Getter can help your park, e-mail SER Fuels Specialist Michael\_D\_Ward@nps.gov.

Make: Caterpillar, Model: 279C Compact Tracked Loader (Multi Terrain), 94 hp, Operating Weight 10,139 lb, Overall length w/ implement 150.9”, width 73”  
Tractor Ground pressure = 4.5 lbs per square inch (1/2 that of a human footprint)

## New Places and Faces

**Congratulations** to two SER firefighters who have recently been promoted within their own programs: **Jack Weer, to Assistant Fire Management Officer at Everglades National Park**, and **Shane Paxton, to Module Leader of the Great Smokies Wildland Fire Module**. Good luck to this next generation of fire leadership!

**Big Cypress National Preserve** has selected **Jordan McKnight** as the new **Assistant Fire Management Officer**. Mr. McKnight joins us from Duncan, Arizona, where he was AFMO for the Clifton Ranger District on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. Mr. McKnight is a veteran of the US Marine Corps and a former Missoula and North Cascades smokejumper. Welcome to the Southeast Region!

## 165 New Red Cards from NPS Wildland Fire Training

Bowling Green, KY; St. Marys, GA; Gaffney, SC; Homestead, FL--Its official title is PMS310-3, “Incident Qualification Card;” but because it used to be printed in red ink, firefighters still call it a red card. For all intents and purposes, this document is a license to fight wildland fire. To obtain the entry-level operational qualification, “Firefighter Type 2” or FFT2, a person must pass a weeklong course called S130/190, and carry a 45-pound pack 3 miles in under 45 minutes. This winter, S130/190 courses given at MACA, CUIS, KIMO, and EVER at have produced a total of 165 newly qualified wildland firefighters.

As Southeast Regional FMO Samuel Larry put it, “Thanks to the energy of our trainers at these four parks, we have built significant capacity in our own staff and our cooperators to safely manage planned and unplanned ignitions across the region.”

### Of 165 New Firefighters...

26 = NPS employees  
51 = Job Corps employees  
>100 new red cards issued at MACA

## Big Cypress Burns 20,000 Acres in January

Naples, FL--The most productive prescribed fire program in the National Park Service, Big Cypress National Preserve, completed prescribed burns totaling over 20,000 acres in January, 2012. The largest burns were conducted near Turner River (Airplane Prairie) and Bear Island. This year the crew focused on treating areas less than half a mile from roads or structures that had gone more than five years without burning. Using this prioritization method, the crew has made significant progress toward reproducing a natural fire return interval of 3 to 5 years across the park’s 500,000 burnable acres.

