

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Fire FY09 Annual Report



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Fiscal Year 2009 Year End Report

Fire Management

The Indiana Dunes fire program saw four personnel changes this last year. Mel Lothschutz accepted the Assistant Fire Management Officer position, Brandon Ramirez accepted a station captain position, Mike Grismer accepted firefighter position, and Josh Goldstein left INDU for a position in Arizona. The fire program at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore supports satellite parks of Sleeping Bear Dunes, Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial with fire refreshers, training, fiscal and administrative support. We issued and maintained 85 qualification cards for employees at INDU as well as our satellite parks, updated IQCS files, responded to training needs and managed position task books.

The fire management program responded to and extinguished 19 wildland fires in and bordering national lakeshore property, totaling 165 acres.

It was an uncommonly slow year in getting firefighters out on wildland fires, but the program was still able to support 10 different resource orders. The fire program sent out 10 crew members to 8 different locations across the country, from prescribed fire support, to fire use and wildland fire support. The crew members went out as fire effects monitors, engine bosses, hand crew members, helicopter crew members and filled in as supervisors at other parks.

We supported many meetings and committees with personnel from the fire program including: the Eastern Area Training Working Team, the park BIOBLITZ, the National Fire Program Management Assistant Conference, the Duneland Harvest Festival, the Human Resource Committee, the IDEA committee, the park recruitment committee, public meetings at the visitor center concerning wildland fire, the Indiana Interagency Coordination Center meetings, and the Regional Fire Management Conference.

The fire program assisted with numerous park projects for resource management, maintenance, resource and visitor protection and interpretation:

- Assisted in the Bio-Blitz for 2 days.
- Cleaned all of the pack test vests, cleaned and disinfected the weight room and bathrooms on a weekly basis, and re-painted the bathrooms.
- The fire fitness coordinator signed up over 50 employees throughout the year to use the fitness facility.
- Assisted at the Chicago Diversity Recruitment Fair.
- Assisted the City of Portage, Michigan City and LaPorte in their 4th of July parades.
- The safety officer (fire personnel) did safety inspections throughout the park, reviewed over 25 SMIS reported at the park, assisted with both the Maple Sugar Time and Harvest Festivals,

attended all safety committee meetings, started the ice cream safety award program, and supervised and worked with the park intern on the water safety plan analysis.

- One crewmember worked with regional personnel to update the fire programs' mapping SOP, it has been implemented and used region wide
- Cut, removed, and recycled 80% of the fence at the Portage Lakefront Property and Miller Woods, recycling well over 10,000 pounds of metal.
- Assisted the Indiana Dunes State Park after their campground flooding.
- Assisted with set-up and day of logistics for the Duneland Harvest Festival.
- Assisted in the removal of a large tree and debris after the storm at Portage Lakefront.
- Assisted maintenance twice with filling the barricades at the campground.
- Cutting hazard trees for maintenance at the campground (multiple days).
- Assisted maintenance twice by pumping out the basement of Cowles Lodge after flooding.
- Assisted maintenance with cleaning out culverts on multiple occasions.
- Assisted maintenance for 3 days with tree cleanup in the Li-Co-Ki-Wi area after the tornado.
- Assisted in the clean-up of the boneyard, in preparation for the paving project.
- Assisted maintenance by sprinkling fresh concrete at the Bailly contact station.
- Assisted maintenance with flushing out lines at Mt. Baldy.
- Outfitted, stored and responded on 5 different occasions for RVP with the stokes basket to National Lakeshore beachfront property.
- Assisted LE on the July 3rd, 4th & 5th at the grilling area at West Beach.
- Assisted RVP twice with Marijuana removal off of Boo Road.
- Plotted out access points and created a map for the park to use during stokes basket response on beach safety.
- Assisted RVP on multiple occasions to multiple locations to cut trees out of roadways.
- Assisted RM with Beaver Dam removal, using the engines.
- Assisted RM at Mnoke Prairie with restoration projects on a semi-monthly basis.



Prescribed Fire

The fall of 2008 and the spring of 2009 were very wet, but the fire program was still able to complete 2 planned ignitions in the spring for a total of 475 acres. In addition, in the spring, small scale Oriental Bittersweet research plots were burned at four different locations on three separate days for a total of 1 acre. The program also burned piles in at Mnoke Prairie and the Nelson House for a total of 13 acres. The program cut and piled fuel on 9 acres of land at Mnoke Prairie.

A lot of time was spent working on Wildland Urban Interface projects throughout the park. A total of 14 acres of thinning around park structures was done in 7 locations (Bailly/Chellberg, the artist in residence, the 3 park dorms, the campground, and the Douglas Center). Approximately 70 acres of fuel breaks were created between national lakeshore property and the bordering towns. The fire program contracted a mowing project for 3 acres along the Old Harbor Belt in Miller Woods.



Training

The national lakeshore fire program instructed and sent crew members to numerous trainings.

The program provided crew training to 16 different courses. Of course, everyone completed mandatory DOI IT training and then completed one or more of the following: IS-700/800/804/809 all on line to support all risk incidents, defensive driving, audio supervisory training, Botany field training, and attended training at Task Force Tips in Valparaiso. The fire program sent crewmembers to the following NWCG classes: RX-310, Rx-301, S-271 as well as Effective Communication for Smoke Management in a Changing Air Quality Environment workshop, the Prescribed Fire Training Center Program for 3 weeks, Vegetative Monitoring in Management Context training, the 1st Annual Midwest Wildland Fire Engine Academy, and a Wilderness Medical Association EMT course.

National lakeshore personnel instructed many classes here at the dunes including: S-211 portable pumps and water use, S-270 Basic Air Operations, S-290 Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior, 3 wildland fire refreshers, 2 first aid/CPR classes, S-130/190 Basic Wildland Firefighter class, and 8 pack tests throughout the year. All courses were attended by park, state, local and interagency cooperators.

Crewmembers also instructed many classes out of the park including: the wildland fire refresher at Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, S-215 Wildland Fire in the Urban Interface at the Missouri Wildfire Academy, Foam Use and Engine Operations at the 1st Annual Midwest Wildland Fire Engine Academy and the wildland portion of the structural firefighter I/II class at Union Township Fire Department and Chesterton Fire Department.

The park Safety Officer (firefighter) took the following safety classes; Hazard communications; authorities, roles and responsibilities; introduction to OSHA standards; PPE; resources, references, and standards.



Fire Effects

The Fire Effects crew had a busy summer visiting 187 plots and collecting fuel data from 217 transect lines within those plots.

Fall 2008–INDU: Total 57 reads

Spring 2009-INDU: Total 53 reads

Cowles Dune = 26

Fuels and Post Burn reads=27

Summer 2009-INDU Total 101 reads

39 Fire Management Handbook plots

62 Project Level Monitoring plots

Summer 2009_LIBO: Total 6 reads

This year effort was made to have all seasonal start the same day which helps with a more efficient training period. In addition, Institute of Botanical Training presented a developed formal training for fire effects seasonal employees, other park staff as well as other local parties. This training consisted of review of written INDU protocols and FMH manual, sampling and FFI data base entry exercises.

FFI data base instructions were written to expanded, and refine current instructions to help seasonal staff enter, label, and store data correctly. This was the first year (2009) in which Fire Effects crew used the new Project Level Monitoring protocols and datasheets which underwent extensive review and revision by Mary and fire ecologist. The results were cleaner, clearer and cohesive protocols. This benefited seasonal crew members' learning and implementation of correct protocols.

In 2009, all of the PL monitoring data for 125 plots with data for 5 years from 2004 to 2008 was re-entered into the new data entry forms and quality checked. Data collected in the fall 2008, spring 2009 and summer 2009, has been entered into the data base bringing us current with entry and some data entry quality checking remains.

INDU digitized of all photos from slides for plot documentation. Procedures and instructions were written to maintain this organization.

A sampling project was completed in late winter/early spring in Cowles Dunes to help the regional fire ecologist estimate historic black oak density to aid in stating target conditions in savannas. A draft fire report of Cowles Dune was completed and a Dune Ridge report has been initiated.

Lincoln Boyhood Fire Effects

In spring of 2009, a strong weather event created windfall in the prescribed fire unit. Fire crew conducted some clean up prior to the Lincoln event in spring of 2009. In September 2009, a summer sampling was conducted in the unit and a post site draft report was written and is being revised to share with LIBO staff.



Education/Prevention

The fire program had a booming year concerning fire prevention and education. The program:

- Created the Junior Firefighter Program, SOP and Activity Booklet and awarded over 400 badges upon their completion.
- Implemented the Junior Firefighter Program, completing 3 programs at the campground.
- Assisted Beverly Shores and Ogden Dunes at their Open houses during prevention week with an engine.
- Distributed flyers to local residents for fall and spring prescribed fire units, including schools, gas stations and post offices.
- Attended Earth Day festival at Sunset Hills County Park with Smokey and met with over 300 visitors.
- Assisted interpretation with an Arbor Day program at the visitor center.
- Provided a children's program at the field station for the pre-school children.
- Represented the fire program at the Green Gary event at Marquette Park with an engine and staff.
- Went to Munster School System for National Parks Day and interacted with over 115 kids with an engine and Smokey Bear.
- Provided 5 'park kids' programs for Interpretation and National Geographic.
- Instructed an education program at Saint Mary of the Lake kindergarten class in New Buffalo, MI.
- Represented the park and the fire program at the 'Touch a Truck' program at Marquette Park, interacting with over 100 kids and families.
- Assisted at the Porter County Fair in collaboration with the Porter County Fire Association.
- Participated in the back to school safety program at Terra Trace Trailer Park in Michigan City for more than 75 kids.

Awards

Jim Whitenack received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Shawnee National Forest for his assistance with the Eastern Area Engine Academy.

MaryEllen Lothschutz and Dan Morford received awards for their assistance with Bio Blitz.

Joe James, Erin Skaggs and Mel Lothschutz received their 10 year service certificates from the NPS.

Neal Mulconrey, Micah Bell, Jim Whitenack, Jeff Nieland and Nate Orsburn received awards for their assistance instructing classes outside the park, for the Fire Program in the spring.

Mike Grismer, Jeff Nieland and Evan Jones received awards for their work cleaning up dumped material on NPS property in Miller.

Bill Mullins received an award for revising the fire program's fire mapping SOP, as well as his work cleaning up the GIS fire files.

MaryEllen Lothschutz received the 2009 safety committee award.

Micah Bell received the 2009 Superintendents safety award.

INDU Fire Management Permanent Staff

Fire Management Officer	Dan Morford
Fire Program Management Assistant	Erin Skaggs
AFMO – Wild Fire Operations Specialist	Mary Ellen Lothschutz
Interagency Dispatcher (IICC)	David Nugent
Biological Science Technician	Neal Mulconrey
Lead Fire Effects Monitor	Mary Fisher-Dunham
Prevention/Education Technician	Micah Bell
Supervisory Forestry Technician	Joseph James
Lead Forestry Technician	Jim Whitenack
Forestry Technician (senior)	Evan Jones
Forestry Technician (Firefighter)	Jeff Nieland
Forestry Technician (Firefighter)	Mike Grismer
Supervisory Forestry Technician (St 2)	Brandon Ramirez
Lead Forestry Technician	Nate Orsburn
Forestry Technician (senior)	Bill Mullins
Forestry Technician (senior)	vacant
Forestry Technician (Firefighter)	Brad Tyskiewicz