



Looking Back Fire Season 2006



It's time for our annual "look back at fire season" in Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks (SEKI). Several noteworthy things happened this year that we are excited to share with you.

New Fire Management Officer: Our fire and fuels management program has a new leader! In May, Dave Bartlett was hired as the parks' Fire Management Officer (FMO) after serving as the Kings Canyon District FMO since 2001. His fire career has spanned 23 years while working for both the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. "I am honored to work for the SEKI fire program and will continue its strong traditions of safety, ecosystem restoration, community protection, and education," said Bartlett. He replaces Bill Kaage, who served as the FMO from 1996 until 2005.

Mobile Learning Center: The parks have received much praise this year for the new mobile learning center called "The Fire Place." The center is a small cargo trailer decorated with hand-painted murals by artist Ali Pearson. It houses exhibits and activities about fire history, ecology, and management. Over 2,100 people visited the center this year during fire incidents in the parks and at local community events. "The Fire Place" was

made possible by donations from The Sequoia Fund, the Bank of the Sierra, and Tru Trailers of Fresno.

Returning to Redwood Mountain: Redwood Mountain (the largest sequoia grove in the parks) is considered the birthplace of prescribed fire in the Sierra Nevada. Some of the first fire research on giant sequoias occurred in this grove in the mid-1960s. It was here that we learned how sequoias are dependent on fire for their reproduction. Based on this research, the parks instituted a prescribed fire program nearly 40 years ago. Many early burns focused on the Redwood area, but since that time priorities shifted and burning projects moved to other areas of the parks. Sequoia and Kings Canyon resumed its burning program on Redwood Mountain in 2004 and completed the first significant project this year with the Upper Redwood Prescribed Fire. "It is very satisfying to return to the Redwood Mountain area and maintain the important work that was done there three decades ago," said Ben Jacobs, burn boss for the project.

Offering National Assistance: In 2006, over 9 million acres burned in the United States and SEKI firefighters were dispatched

- Continued on back

Fire Events & Projects

Planned Projects: The parks finished 5½ of the 9 prescribed fire projects that were planned for this year. The burns totaled 1,708 acres. One project occurred in Ash Mountain, one in Cedar Grove, two in the Grant Grove area, one in Mineral King, and one near Dorst Campground. The parks also completed mechanical fuel reduction work around structures in Cedar Grove and Wuksachi. Crews will burn the piles of vegetation from these projects over the winter.

Unplanned Fires: Out of 35 lightning-caused fires, 25 fires were allowed to spread naturally as *wildland fire use* projects to maintain forest diversity and health. The other ten fires were suppressed. While most of the lightning fires remained small (approximately one acre), the Roaring and Ridge Fires joined together to become 1,782 acres just south of the Cedar Grove area. The Burnt Fire, northeast of Tehipite Dome, grew to 627 acres. Only five human-caused fires occurred all season and burned less than two acres.



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Fire Season Events 2006



April

- Debut of "The Fire Place," the parks' new mobile learning center (see photo on left)

June

- Ash Mountain prescribed burns completed (25 acres)
- Horse Trail Prescribed Fire completed in Cedar Grove area (120 acres)

July

- Upper Redwood Prescribed Fire completed (619 acres)
- Three lightning-caused fires began: Roaring, Ridge, and Burnt

- Mechanical fuel reduction project completed in Cedar Grove area

August

- Mechanical work near Wuksachi completed

October

- Silver Prescribed Fire completed in Mineral King area (357 acres)

November

- 155 acres (out of 375) of Valley View Prescribed Fire completed in Grant Grove area
- Cabin Meadow Prescribed Fire completed near Dorst Campground (432 acres)

Comments or Questions?

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to help. While still maintaining our ability to respond to fires here at home, our personnel worked on large fires in California, New Mexico, and Washington. This assistance not only helped our sister agencies but also provided valuable experience for our staff.

Saying Goodbye: This season, the local fire community lost two good friends and peers. David Quintero, a member of SEKI's Crew 91, died in an off-duty car accident around Lake Kaweah in August. In September, Robert Stone, a local Battalion Chief for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), was killed in an airplane crash while

assessing a wildfire. The parks extend our deepest sympathies to the families of these great men. They will be missed.

Discovery of Prehistoric Pottery: In June, crewmembers from Engine 51 at Grant Grove discovered a prehistoric pot while working on the Horse Trail Prescribed Fire in the Cedar Grove area of Kings Canyon National Park. Based on information from well-dated archeological sites in the Owens Valley of eastern California, the pot is estimated to be 150 to 500 years old. "Finding a nearly complete pot is rare," says Park Archeologist Tom Burge. "The engine crew

should be applauded because their actions probably saved the pot from further damage."



Prehistoric pottery discovered during prescribed fire.