



The Role of the Resource Advisor During Prescribed and Unplanned Fires

- *Resource Advisors (READs) provide information on natural and cultural resource issues to fire staff during the initial planning stages for prescribed fires or when the parks are responding to a wildfire.*
- *They work with fire management teams during fires in the park and provide a link to local resource knowledge that is particularly important if the team is from outside the parks.*
- *They also work on the ground with firefighters where they provide information and advice during fire response.*

How do the parks ensure that natural and cultural resources are protected during a fire event? The parks have an obligation to protect historic structures, endangered species, encourage the health of sequoia trees, and more. They are also mandated to use prescribed fire and respond to wildfires.

With all wildfires, managers will make a determination on how to handle each fire based on its location, elevation, potential for spread, fuels, and other variables.

Fires that threaten lives, homes, or infrastructure are suppressed. Lightning fires that can be safely managed



Firefighters cleared vegetation around the Squatters Cabin and wrapped it in fire-resistant material to protect it during the Huckleberry Prescribed Fire in 2011.

NPS photo by Tony Caprio.



The Lion Fire started on the Sequoia National Forest and spread into park land. This fire required protection of a critical cultural resource, the Quinn Cabin, and a critical natural resource, the endangered Little Kern Golden Trout.

NPS photo by Lyle Pope.

promote forest health. Periodic fires limit the size and severity of subsequent fires and helps create a mosaic of diverse habitats for plants and animals.

Once firefighters determine the best response to a wildfire or plan to ignite a prescribed fire, they work closely with the READ to best protect the natural and cultural resources within the fire area.

The READ helps firefighters know what resources need to be protected from fire, such as historic cabins or nesting areas for endangered species. READs use detailed maps to show firefighters, including those from outside the parks, where resources are located.

In some cases, fire may actually benefit certain resources. In these parks, the fire-adapted sequoia tree takes advantage of fire; however named sequoia trees are protected from fire.

Fire may encourage the growth of plants used by Native American Indians such as tule grass (for basketry) or black oaks (acorns are a staple ...

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Project Locations for 2013

The parks are planning **8 projects** this year totaling up to **3,579 acres**. They are designed to improve protection of communities and restore or maintain forest health. Remember, the ultimate timing and completion of burns depends on funding, air quality, local and national fire activity, fuel moisture, and weather.

1 Valley Floor
(140 acres)
Early spring or late fall
prescribed fire

2 Heliport
(28 acres)
Early spring or late fall
prescribed fire

3 North Boundary
(242 acres)
Fall prescribed fire

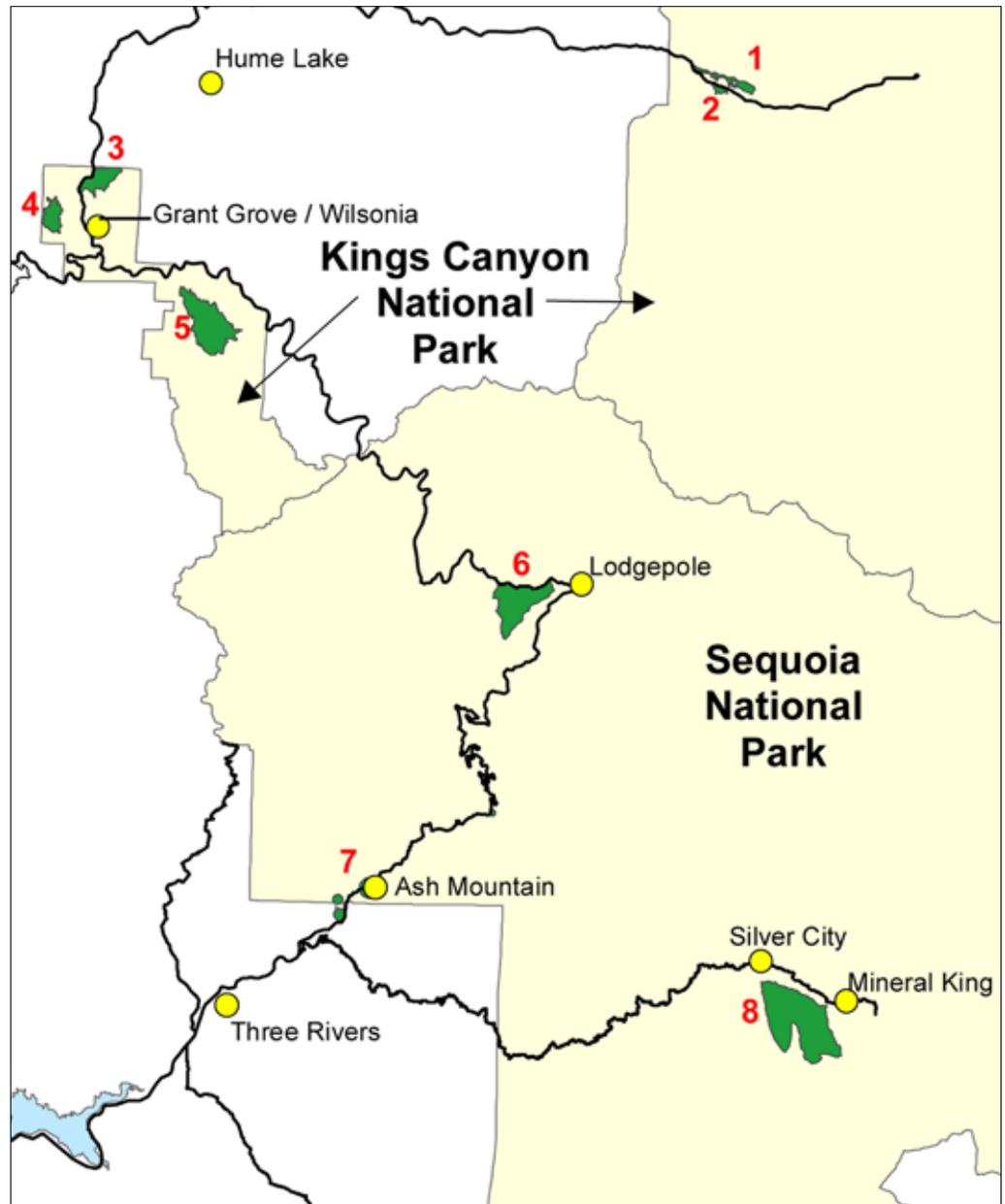
4 Swale West
(204 acres)
Fall prescribed fire

5 Goliath (769 acres)
Redwood Canyon
Summer prescribed fire

6 Halstead
(686 acres)
Fall prescribed fire

**7 Ash Mountain /
Hospital Rock**
(25 acres)
Spring/early summer
prescribed fire

8 Mosquito
(1485 acres)
Fall prescribed fire



What About Unplanned Fires?

Lightning fires and human-caused fires are unplanned events. NPS crews are trained to respond to these situations. When necessary, the parks shift priorities from planned projects to respond to other fires.

The Role of the READ (continued)



This pottery was unearthed during a prescribed fire in 2006. This undocumented cultural artifact was a significant find.
NPS Photo

food source). Historic landscapes may benefit from a natural fire cycle to maintain an open, sunny forest typical of the Sierra Nevada. In some cases, fire has revealed areas or objects of cultural significance.

Sometimes, the suppression actions taken on a fire may be damaging to the resource as well. When firefighters construct firelines, they may damage archeological sites or critical habitat. The READ can advise firefighters where these areas are located and, often, the fireline can be constructed to avoid them. In Wilderness Areas, minimum impact techniques meet control and resource objectives with the least environmental, cultural, and social impacts.

READs will also define the repair standards of the fireline after the fire. This can help prevent unnatural erosion and prevent firelines from becoming unofficial social trails.

Retardant drops can damage resources and the READ can advise firefighters of critical riparian areas or areas with threatened and endangered species. READs help define the standards for how retardant can be effectively used while protecting natural and cultural resources.

READs help firefighters from outside agencies understand local issues. Proper food storage by firefighters, for example, is crucial to help the parks efforts to maintain a wild bear population.

The READ also advises parks crews on more subtle issues such as the timing of a burn. Will an early spring project negatively impact nesting birds or the budding of plants? Conversely, the proper timing may encourage seeding and germination of native species, create snags for woodpeckers and owls, and lead to greater biodiversity.

The parks proactive READ program is one of the best practices used to help the fire program achieve excellence by restoring fire safely, receiving the benefits of a natural fire cycle, while protecting the natural and cultural objects the parks are tasked with managing for our visitors to enjoy.



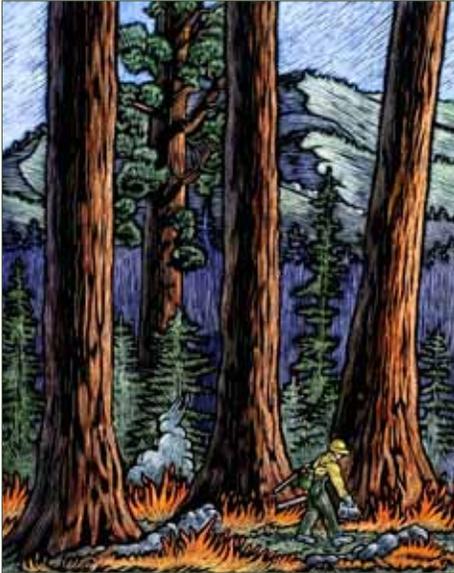
Top Photo: Firelines, like this one in the Hidden Fire, are used to stop fire spread. Bottom photo: After the fire is controlled, the fireline is repaired to reduce impacts such as erosion or to prevent the firelines becoming an unofficial trail.

NPS photo



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
 47050 Generals Highway
 Three Rivers, CA 93271-9651



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National Park Service
 U.S. Department of the Interior

Writer / Editor
Deb Schweizer
 (559) 565-3703
 debra_schweizer@nps.gov

Park Superintendent (acting)
Woody Smeck starting 4/7/2013

Fire Management Officer
David Allen

For more information
www.nps.gov/seki/naturescience/fire.htm



These photos were taken during the 2008 Hidden Fire. Retardant drops can be useful, especially in lighter fuels like brush and grass, to slow fire growth. This allows firefighters to dig effective fireline. However, retardant can have negative effects in riparian areas, for aquatic species, or near critical resources like sequoias or cultural artifacts and landscapes. Fire response factors firefighter and public safety, the protection of property, and then resource concerns when determining the best response to a fire.

NPS Photos

Questions, comments, or requests to be included in the email distribution list for Fire and Fuels information should be directed to Deb Schweizer. See contact info to the left.