



Resource Advisors and Fire Management

Introduction

Fire management activities (planning, suppression, burned area rehabilitation, and fire use) inevitably interface closely with many aspects of natural and cultural resources management. To help assure that the interactions result in improved protection of park resources, park staff members are actively engaged in the development of a Resource Advisor (READ) program and are contributing to information that is being input into the newly released Wildfire Decision Support System (WFDSS).



Management Needs

Fire suppression activities often have high potential for environmental and cultural resource damage. For instance, fire retardant can be harmful to fish and aquatic insects, fireline construction can destroy archeological resources, fire tools and equipment can inadvertently aid in the spread of exotic plants, and helicopter overflights can disturb nesting birds. Frequently personnel who are assigned to fire suppression actions are not familiar with local resource conditions and are therefore subject to making poor planning and operational decisions.

Within this context, it is clear that local staff members who very familiar with park resources and the sensitivity of those resources are essential to successful fire operations.

Accomplishments

Development of a Resource Advisor program at Shenandoah is in its infancy. Thus far, a limited number of staff have been READ trained and some background information that would be used by the Advisors has been gathered. Staff members have also prepared the first draft of a Resource Advisor Handbook for the park.

Resource Advisor programs are becoming fairly common in parks and forests in the western U.S. These programs are much less common in the eastern part of the country.

In addition to development of the Resource Advisor program, staff from the Resource Management Division have contributed information that is to be included in the park's version of the Wildfire Decision Support System. This information consists of specific statements, intended as guidance, that afford protection to key park resources. Having developed that information, it is clear that much more detailed guidance will need to be developed on topics such as Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics, prevention of the spread of exotic plants, and rehabilitation and restoration.





Resource Advisors and Fire Management (continued...)
