



National Park Service Fire Management



National Science Teachers Learn About Wildland Fire

“ . . . to promote excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning for all.”

During the first week of December 2003, 1200 educators from throughout the world converged on Reno, Nevada for a National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Conference. Each year thousands of teachers attend these conferences to learn about the latest advances in technology, to enrich their skills and gain new ideas about teaching, and to update their knowledge in science disciplines. This year some of the teachers were introduced to the world of wildland fire by an interagency group of fire educators.

Representatives from the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and the Nevada Division of Forestry gave presentations on a variety of wildland fire-related issues during the special four-hour session. Teachers from nine states and from as far away as Seoul, Korea attended the course on wildland fire. Topics discussed included basic fire behavior, fire ecology, wildland urban interface issues and fire in the national parks. In accordance with the conference's goals, a wide range of fire education curriculum materials were also presented, including Fireworks, Living with Fire, Burning Issues and Fire in the Pacific Northwest. These curriculum materials can be then be utilized in the teachers' classrooms to further the students' knowledge and understanding of wildland fire.

The National Science Teachers Association is the premier organization for science teachers. With over 55,000 members, it is the also the largest organization in the world for science teachers and others interested in the quality of science education. Providing and expanding professional development for current and prospective science teachers is one of the four elements of the NSTA mission. One of the primary ways NSTA provides development opportunities is at their national and regional conferences.

Being able to address some of the attendees of the National Science Teachers Conference on wildland fire issues and education curriculum is a good example of how we can utilize educators to introduce these issues to the classroom. Doing this on an interagency basis also provided us with the opportunity to discuss how we work together as fire managers to address these issues. Education of our public, and especially our young people, on wildland fire is vital to the understanding and acceptance of our programs.