



LARGE FIRE HISTORY IN THE US

Where does the Wallow Fire fit within historically large fires? The Wallow Fire has become one of the single largest fires in U.S. history. While it is the largest fire in recent history, the Peshtigo Fire of 1871 remains the largest in U.S. history. *The Wallow Fire was declared 100% contained on July 8, 2011.*

Large fires fall into two categories: single fires and complexes (*several fires managed collectively*). At times a “single fire” can result from a small number of smaller fires joining early on - i.e. the Rodeo-Chediski Fire.

Largest single fires on record:

	Fire Name	Year	States	Size (Acres)
1	Peshtigo	1871	Wisconsin and Michigan	3.78 million
2	Lower Michigan	1881	Michigan	2.5 million
3	Great Fire	1845	Oregon	1.5 million
4	Yacoult	1902	Washington/Oregon	1 million +
5	Adirondack	1903	New York	637,000
6	Inowak	1997	Alaska	610,000
7	Wallow	2011	Arizona and New Mexico	538,049
8	Boundary	2004	Alaska	537,098
9	Minto Flats South	2009	Alaska	517,078
10	Biscuit	2002	Oregon	499,570
11	Rodeo-Chediski	2002	Arizona	469,000

Notable wildfire complexes include:

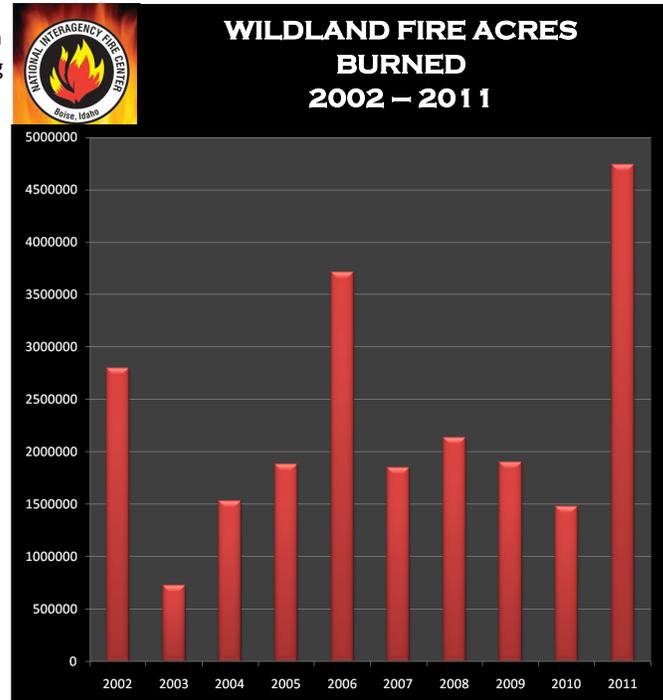
The Big Burn of 1910 in northern Idaho and western Montana burned 3 million acres in a period of a few days. The Big Burn was caused by multiple lightning strikes which burned together due to high winds and hot temperatures.

In 1987, numerous lightning fires burned 640,000 acres in northern California and southern Oregon. The lightning occurred during a drought period in that region.

In 1988, almost 1.6 million acres burned in and around Yellowstone National Park. Fires were the result of multiple ignitions from a lightning storm.

In 2004, the Taylor Complex burned 1.3 million acres in Alaska.

East Amarillo Complex (2006 in TX) burned 907,000 acres. This complex included dozens—if not hundreds—of wind-driven grass and brush fires.



FIREWISE EFFORTS SAVE COLORADO HOME

The following is an excerpt from the Summer 2011 Firewise Communities How-To newsletter. For more information, visit www.firewise.org.

Ever wonder whether Firewise principles work? Ed Brown and Val Hall, who live west of Fort Collins, Colorado, found their answer in April.

Ed Brown and his wife Val Hall witnessed the Crystal Mountain wildfire burn down the mountainside. On the night of April 2, 2011, Ed and Val watched a 9:00 pm news report that the fire was 70 percent contained—enough comfort for Ed to go to bed for the night. He was awakened by Val an hour later by her beckons to their front door.



“We saw the big, orange glow and immediately called three near-by neighbors to evacuate,” says Ed.

Brown and Hall left their home with their son and family friend at 11:15 pm to head a friend’s house two miles away as fire balls blew by their car in the 80 mile per hour wind gusts.

“The drive was intense but we didn’t see the brunt until we got to our friends’ house. That’s when we saw the horrendous orange glow on

that mountain,” said Brown.

Brown and Hall could hear structures burning not far from their friend’s home. While much couldn’t be seen through the black smoke tinged orange by the wildfire, the sound of exploding propane tanks was unmistakable.

They returned home on Sunday morning. Their home was the only one that had been threatened and withstood the fire. The destroyed houses that were now blackened rubble had been a variety of log homes or cedar sided with asphalt shingles.

A photo of Brown and Hall’s home two days after the fire has a distinctive characteristic obvious from even a great distance. A gleaming blue metal roof sits atop their wood home surrounded by a ring of defensible space and a few trees.

“We have been Firewise for years,” says Hall, “ever since building next to Roosevelt National Forest. We have a metal roof, tree branches trimmed up to 20’ off the ground and an area around the house that has been grazed by goats. It saved our home along with a bit of luck.”

Brown and Hall have followed Firewise principles independently since 1997. Hall subscribes to the How-To Newsletter. She and Brown adapt the guidance given in their personal wildfire safety plan for their property.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

If you own a home in a fire-prone area, you should take a few simple steps to make your property more defensible. It will increase your safety and that of firefighters, too.

Protecting Your Home from a Wildland Fire

Every year many families unnecessarily lose their homes and possessions to wildland fire. These losses can be minimized if homeowners take the time to become aware of ways to reduce their wildfire risk and complete a few simple steps. To find out more about protecting your home from wildland fire, visit www.firewise.org.

Use Fire Resistant Building Material - "The Best Thing That You Can Do"

The roof and exterior structure of your home should be constructed of non-combustible materials such as fire resistant roofing (metal, asphalt, tile, etc) and siding (stucco, fiber cement siding, etc). Combustible roof materials are thought to be a significant factor in home loss during a wildfire.

Maintain a Survivable Space - "Things You Can Do Today"

- Clean roof surfaces and gutters of pine needles, leaves, branches, etc., regularly to avoid accumulation of flammable materials.
- Remove portions of any tree extending within 10 feet of the chimney.
- Maintain a screen constructed of non-flammable material over the flue opening of every chimney or stovepipe. Mesh openings of the screen should not exceed 1/4 inch.
- Landscape vegetation should be spaced so that fire can not be carried to the structure or surrounding vegetation.
- Remove low branches from trees surrounding your home.
- A fuel break should be maintained around all structures.
- Dispose of stove or fireplace ashes and charcoal briquettes only after soaking them in a metal pail of

water.

- Store gasoline in an approved safety can away from occupied buildings.
- Propane tanks should be located away from buildings. Keep the area clear of flammable vegetation.
- All combustibles such as firewood, picnic tables, boats, etc. should be kept away from structures.
- Garden hose should be connected to outlet and reach around the home.
- Addressing should be indicated at all intersections and on structures.
- All roads and driveways should be at least 16 feet in width.
- Have fire tools handy such as: ladder long enough to reach the roof, shovel, rake and bucket for water.
- Each home should have at least two different entrance and exit routes.

LEGISLATION

On June 14, 2011, Chief Tidwell (USDA) and Deputy Assistant Secretary Thorsen (UDOI) made a presentation to the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The purpose of the hearing was to consider the wildfire management programs of the federal land management agencies. The testimony emphasized the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, Fire-Adapted Communities, the FLAME Act, and Wildfire Response. A synopsis of the hearing is provided below by E&E Publishing:

Just as doctors say prevention is cheaper than treatment for harmful diseases, the nation's forests must be actively thinned in order to reduce the damage and costs of wildfires, Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) and Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee yesterday.

To demonstrate the point, Kyl distributed photographs of a treated forest near Alpine, Ariz., that has managed to escape the worst impacts of wildfires that have raged through the Grand Canyon State in recent weeks and already cost \$65 million -- the biggest and costliest fires in state history.

"We have evidence already that the areas that were thinned performed a lot better than the areas that were not," said Kyl, who testified at the panel's annual hearing to examine wildfire management programs at the Interior Department and Forest Service.

"I believe Chief Tidwell will conclude that the communities were saved because of thinning in the vicinities of those communities," he said. "The problem is we're just treating a drop in the bucket when it comes to the amount of acreage we need to treat."

Kyl and Tidwell both touted the success and promise of Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration projects, which are designed to accomplish a range of Obama administration priorities through partnerships with states, including watershed restoration and sustainable and fire-adapted communities.

Kyl cited the Four Forest Restoration Initiative in Arizona, a \$3.5 million project that focuses on the restoration of the southwestern ponderosa pine ecosystem and will treat up to 50,000 acres per year.

"You don't want to be penny-wise and pound foolish. ... The cost of fighting the fires and reconstruction afterward far exceeds the

prevention costs," Kyl said. "It's like any other medical situation: Prevention will save you a lot of money in the long run, but it does require an upfront commitment."

Tidwell said he sees the collaborative program as a "model for the future" that has already brought together diverse coalitions, provided long-term funding and allowed work across much larger landscapes than usual.

In Arizona, where federal agencies have deployed 2,500 firefighters to battle three large fires, the agency has seen success from earlier treatments of roughly 40,000 acres, he said.

"Those projects make a difference in those communities," said Tidwell, who urged lawmakers to again provide full funding in 2012 for projects in nine states as part of a broader "integrated resource restoration" plan.

"It's a difference of losing a few homes compared to losing all of the homes," he said.

Tidwell assured members of the panel that the Forest Service has the fiscal resources it needs to deal with current and future fires in the 2011 season, which has already outpaced the acreage burned in 2010. He said his agency by the end of the summer will also have a plan to address an aging air fleet of tankers and other air vehicles used to battle fires.

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But he warned lawmakers that climate change has caused snowpacks to disappear sooner, increasing droughts and prolonging wildfire seasons by more than 30 days in the West.

"We are going to continue to have large fires and the changing climate is one of the factors that will contribute to that," he said.

Tidwell also said Congress must continue to invest in efforts to research and spur beneficial uses of small diameter and noncommercial timber that is removed from forests to reduce wildfire risks and boost forest health. Biomass grants will be needed to explore using timber for renewable energy, he said.

"We can pile it up or transfer it to facilities to be burned for energy," he said. "To me it seems like a better use than piling it up and burning it."

GRANTS & AGREEMENTS

Community Assistance

MIFMU is planning to announce the availability of Community Assistance funds to cooperators by mid July. These funds enable communities to reduce the risk of wildfire through planning and can expedite implementation projects, such as hazardous fuel reduction.

West Region Wildfire Council Mini Grants

WRWC has been receiving fuels reduction proposals from private landowners interested in reducing their wildfire risk by implementing recommendations from their respective CWPPs. These projects are supported financially through Community Assistance funds awarded to WRWC.

Ready Reserve Program

MIFMU applied for approximately \$3400 through the Ready Reserve Program in hopes of continuing to offer wildland training to our cooperators. Announcement of selected grant recipients is expected by the end of the month.

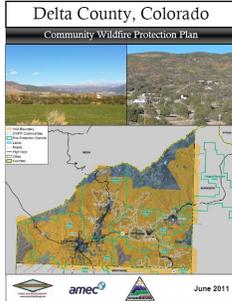
Rural Fire Assistance

USDOJ has announced that RFA funds will not be available to cooperators in FY11. RFA has provided funding to improve the capacity and capabilities of rural and volunteer fire departments in the past. Cooperators may still be able to apply for SFA funds through the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS).



COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for Delta, Gunnison, Montrose and Ouray Counties were completed and delivered to the respective counties on July 6. This marks the completion of an effort that began in 2008 when San Miguel County initiated the development of their CWPP. All six counties within MIFMU (those mentioned above, along with Hinsdale County) have CWPPs in place. In addition to satisfying the requirements in SB09-001, this milestone will outline a work plan to



assist the public in reducing their wildfire risk.

As the county-wide plans are viewed as an umbrella document, communities within each county are encouraged to complete a CWPP specific to their area. Working with WRWC, Log Hill Mesa Fire Protection District will join the list of communities that have community-specific CWPPs as they are beginning to develop a plan specific to their response area. In addition to the CWPP, the fire district will be developing an operational plan to assist their firefighters in responding to a wildfire in the community.



WEST REGION WILDFIRE COUNCIL

The West Region Wildfire Council (WRWC) met on June 16 to discuss the final drafts of the four CWPPs being developed in conjunction with wildfire management consultants Anchor Point Group and AMEC.

After resolving outstanding issues regarding the CWPP revisions, the Council discussed recent wildfire

assignments of several WRWC members and discussed the fire outlook for the coming months.

WRWC has received several proposals for fuels reduction projects on private land related to the recommendations in the respective CWPP. The WRWC Steering Committee will be reviewing the proposals and

responding to the applicants as they are received. WRWC funds fuel reduction projects (*meeting specific criteria*) on private land using Community Assistance funds.

The next WRWC meeting is scheduled for July 21 at the Montrose County Sheriff's Office.



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Look for new updates to come to the MIFMU website in 2010

http://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/dispatch_centers/r2mtc/

July Events

- **Smokey Bear, Ouray Parade, July 4**
- **Pack Test, Montrose, July 5**
- **South Canyon Fire, Colorado, July 6, 1994 - 14 firefighters killed**
- **Rattlesnake Fire, California, July 9, 1953 - 15 firefighters killed**
- **Thirtymile Fire, Washington, July 10, 2001 - 4 firefighters killed**
- **MIFMU Fuels Call, July 12**
- **Guide Fire, New Mexico, July 12, 1994 - 4 firefighters killed**
- **Battlement Creek Fire, Colorado, July 16, 1976 - 2 pilots & 3 firefighters killed**
- **Cart Creek Fire, Utah, July 16, 1977 - 3 firefighters killed**
- **West Region Wildfire Council Meeting, Montrose, July 21**
- **Bass River Fire, New Jersey, July 22, 1977 - 4 firefighters killed**
- **MIFMU Fuels Call, July 26**
- **Rock Creek Fire, Nevada, July 28, 1939 - 5 firefighters killed**

MIFMU MONTHLY