

The Delaware Wildland Firefighter Why We Go West to Fight Fire



I'm constantly reminded of a Delaware crew assignment in Nevada in 2007. The assignment tested our mental capacities more than our physical abilities. As we jumped from fire to fire in Great Basin fuels, several crew members expressed their readiness to head home. Great Basin fuels burn hot and move quickly. I don't think we even saw fire on this trip. However, we did see mile after mile of charred landscape.

Many crew members asked, "What are we even doing out here?" After spending two fire seasons on a BLM Engine in Eastern Oregon, I'll tell you.

Vale, Oregon had a population of 1,874 in 2011. The area is mostly comprised of agricultural fields and cattle ranches. Roughly 90% of the Vale District BLM crew members are locals. You can't walk down the street without someone knowing everyone. As an "East Coaster", I stuck out like a sore thumb. I just wanted to fight fire even though I was back in Great Basin fuels.

There are 4.2 million acres of range land in the Vale District. A local dozer operator leases several acres of this land to graze his 300+ head of cattle. And a local tender operator also leases land for grazing his cattle. My engine boss's family owns the local feed and seed store. The family of another engine boss owns the local livestock market. Others grow onions or beets or



A local rancher looks on as fire fighters battle a blaze on his property.

potatoes. The local pizza shop owner runs a weed wash station on fires.

To sum it up, it was an eye opening experience. Not only did I actually see and fight fire, I learned a lot about fire behavior in this fuel type. More importantly, I became a part of the community. When I returned for a second fire season, I received a warm welcome. It is not just about fighting fire. It is about helping your neighbor, your family, or your friend. It is about protecting their livelihood and their way of life. The effects from wildfire make a huge impact to this community, to my new friends, and to their families.

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**Don't Forget! Fire Camp is at Redden State Forest, Saturday April 26.
Register today! See page 3 for details.**



LOCALS CONT FROM PAGE 1

The 2012 Long Draw Fire burned more than 550,000 acres killing cattle, horses, rabbits, coyote and other animals. A rancher friend of my engine boss discovered 1/3 of his cows and calves killed by the fire. The fire also devastated prime habitats for sage grouse, rabbits and coyote as well as grazing land for cattle. (*The Oregonian*, http://photos.oregonlive.com/photo-essay/2012/07/long_draw_fire_devastates_land.html). It's easy to not see things like this on a 14 day assignment. But this is why we are out here.



Photo courtesy Robert Baldwin.

Nikki Testa
Delaware Wildland Firefighter

Putting it Together

AD Paperwork is required each year for Administratively Determined firefighters to participate in out-of-state wildland fire assignments. This is a critical step in preparation for fire season. As an AD employee, you work for the U.S. Forest Service and are considered a temporary or casual seasonal federal employee. The paperwork requirements are as follows:

- **I-9:** Employment Eligibility Verification - a current passport or drivers license and social security card needed for verification.
- **W-4:** Set up your paycheck to have the correct amount of taxes withheld.
- **Behavior Form:** Ensures that you know the acceptable behavior policy on out-of state mobilizations.
- **Casual Hire Form:** Complete one form for each qualification you have.
- **Direct Deposit:** Ensures that you get timely paychecks deposited into your account.

Red Cards are issued to all firefighters who complete the basic requirements: S-130, S-190, Fire Camp, and a WCT or pack test. Additional qualifications needing specialized training or the completion of task books are added only after meeting the requirements. If you have been red carded through the Delaware Forest Service in the past all you need is an Annual Refresher. The Annual Refresher can be either Fire Camp or RT 130 at Blackbird State Forest.

Your availability is the final piece of the puzzle. This can often times be the most difficult and frustrating thing when waiting for an assignment. The fire crew often mobilizes with little forewarning depending of the severity of the national fire season. It is important to get everything in place that you will need for a potential mobilization such as: AD paperwork, training, boots (already broken-in), physical conditioning, permission to be away from work, paying the bills, etc. Remember, the typical crew assignment is often in very difficult terrain for the two week duration. The more you cross off the list before fire season will do wonders for your sanity especially during the mobilization process.



The Delaware Forest Service's 19th annual one-day Fire Camp will be held on Saturday, April 26, 2014 7am- 6pm.

Participation in this event is required to receive full credit for the S-130 practicum and also counts as the 8-hour mandatory refresher for returning veterans. A live burn is scheduled (weather permitting).

- Please remember to bring your fire boots for the burn and sneakers for the pack test.
- Bring one of the following to complete AD paperwork:
 - 1) US Passport
 - or**
 - 2) your drivers license *and* social security card
- You will need to complete the Health Questionnaire just prior to taking the pack test.



Please also note that we will also be offering an 8-hour **RT130 (Annual Refresher) class two weeks later on Saturday, May 10, 2014 from 7am - 6pm at Blackbird State Forest. If you can't make Fire Camp this is the only make-up date offered.** Please also bring the items listed above to complete the necessary AD paperwork and pack test. Fire boots are not necessary for RT 130.

*If you plan to attend Fire Camp or RT 130, send in the registration form below **before April 11, 2014** to:*

Henry Poole
Delaware Forest Service
2320 S. DuPont Hwy.
Dover, DE 19901
Phone (302) -698-4500



2014 Delaware Forest Service Fire Camp/ RT 130 Registration Form

Please register me for : **FIRE CAMP** or **RT130**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

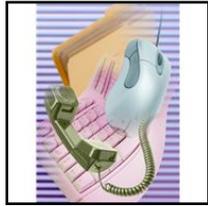
Fire Co./Agency: _____ Email: _____

There is a registration fee of **\$20.00 per person** to help offset the cost of meals and supplies. Your check or money order should be made payable to the Delaware Department of Agriculture.

DO NOT SEND CASH! Fire Camp is a one-day event to be held on Saturday, April 26, 2014 from 7am - 6pm at Redden State Forest (rain or shine). RT 130 is also a one-day event to be held on Saturday May 10th, 2014 from 7am - 5pm at Blackbird State Forest (rain or shine). Don't forget to bring your boots, sneakers for the pack test, and documents for AD paperwork if you want a red card.



Let's Stay In Contact



If you have not been contacted recently by DFS staff to verify your contact information,

please take a moment to complete the form below. This will ensure that we have the correct contact information for upcoming training and important fire program announcements.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send to: Henry Poole, 2320 S. DuPont Hwy., Dover, DE 19901



Delaware Forest Service
2320 S. DuPont Hwy.
Dover, DE 19901

2014 Calendar

April 26

Fire Camp- Redden State Forest

May 10

RT 130 - Blackbird State Forest

May 28 - 31

Virginia Wildfire Academy-
Longwood University, Farmville,
Virginia

June 7 - 13

Mid-Atlantic Wildfire Academy-
Morgantown, WV