



# Success Stories

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## Fire lines, Timber Sales Ease Mark Twain's Wildfire Threat

In the aftermath of two powerful tornadoes that ripped through southeast Missouri on April 24, the Mark Twain National Forest undertook extensive recovery efforts to protect both public and private property from the dangerous fuel loads created by the storm.

Two-hundred mile-per-hour winds tore apart houses, toppled power lines, and flattened trees across 10,000 acres of private and national forest land. Hardest hit were the Fredericktown and Poplar Bluff Ranger Districts. The massive amounts of downed pine and oak stands heightened the threat of wildfire.

Crews on the Mark Twain NF set to work constructing 40 miles of fire lines to protect approximately 450 homes on the



*The April 2002 tornadoes leveled huge tracts of trees, leaving dangerous fuel loads in its wake.*

two districts. Adjacent to the forest, these homes were surrounded by significant amounts of fallen trees and debris. The fire lines were built in record time to help protect private property from wild fires. The state's fall wildfire season usually starts in October.

In addition, Forest Service crews from Colorado and Vermont have been assisting the two districts in building the fire lines and removing the remaining tornado debris.

To further expedite recovery efforts, 21 contracts have been awarded to Missouri timber companies to remove fallen trees on more than 4,500 acres in the tornado-damaged areas.

On July 12, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) granted the Mark Twain NF an exception to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because of the extreme fire conditions created by the tornadoes. NEPA usually requires longer waiting periods for public comment on the various phases of project planning.

This is the sixth time since 1978 that CEQ has granted alternative arrangements to the Forest Service for emergency cleanup. The clean-up is expected to cost between two and three million dollars.

According to Galen Johnson, incident commander for the tornado cleanup, public and employee safety continue to be the project's top priority.

"People wanting to use national forest lands in the damaged areas need to check with the district ranger's office that manages those areas," Johnson said. "Some areas are closed to the public for safety reasons. Other areas have restrictions on the use of open fires. When hunting season opens, this may also affect hunters who use national forest lands."

In the west earlier this summer, wildfires were successfully contained in areas where forest fuels had been reduced prior to the outbreak of fire. The fuels build up from the tornadoes was so thick in some areas that forest staff could not safely access them to survey fuel estimates.

But with the aggressive fuel-reduction efforts on the Mark Twain NF, the danger of a catastrophic wildfire has been greatly reduced through a combination of preventative measures aimed at restoring forest health while protecting public and private lands.

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## Huron-Manistee Fuel Breaks Protect Residents

In an effort to better protect public and private property, the Huron-Manistee National Forest has cleared dangerous undergrowth and provided critical fuel breaks adjacent to Oscoda/AuSable residential areas and the Oscoda Area Schools.

The forested lands west of the Oscoda/AuSable communities have a long history of wildland fire. In 1911, most of the structures in these communities were destroyed when a wildfire burned out of the “plains” all the way to Lake Huron. Records for this area also document a 2100-acre fire that burned this area in the mid 1940’s. The River Road fire of 1984 burned approximately 1500 acres in this same area and threatened the Oscoda Area Schools and homes in that vicinity. Numerous smaller fires have occurred in this area over the years.

The fuels of this fire prone ecosystem are made up primarily of jack pine stands of varying ages. The jack pine fuel type is considered to be one of the most volatile and dangerous fuel types occurring in the United States. The jack pine that regenerated from the River Road fire was becoming an increasingly larger threat to the schools and the subdivisions adjacent to the old burn. With an increasing emphasis on fuel treatment on National Forest lands, this area was identified as the Tawas Ranger District’s number one priority for hazard reduction.



*The Huron-Manistee NF fuel breaks are aimed at containing fire before it can threaten public and private property.*

Authorized by a Decision Memo signed in the spring of 1997, a contract was awarded and completed the fall of that same year for a “hydro-axe” treatment on National Forest lands adjacent to subdivisions and the schools. Over-story trees that had survived the earlier fires, as well as some of the regenerated oaks, were left to soften the visual impact of the fuelbreak adjacent to these high use areas and River Road Scenic Byway.

As part of this same effort, the Oscoda Area Schools funded the same treatment on the portions of their campus that contained this same fuel type. On a hot, dry and windy afternoon the following spring, a fire started on National Forest lands behind the Oscoda High School. Firefighting forces from the Huron Shores Ranger Station, Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Oscoda Township Fire Department all responded to the fire. Fanned by the high winds and low humidity, the fire spread rapidly in a northwesterly direction toward the subdivision along Grass Lake Road. Flames from the fire shot over 40 feet into the air. Tractor-plog units flanked both sides of the fire but were unable to pinch off the head of the fire before it reached the subdivision along Grass Lake Road.

The fuel break created along this road the previous fall allowed Oscoda Township Firefighters to deploy structure protection forces along the road. While the fire spotted across the road into fuels around the homes, the firefighters were able to safely stop the spread and no structures were lost.

Oscoda Township Fire Chief Allan McGregor praised the fuel-break work that had been completed. He credited it for stopping what would have been the certain loss of structures had it not been completed, and also for the added safety it provided to firefighters battling the blaze.

Since this incident, the fuel reduction work has continued in this area. A more comprehensive plan has been developed that will provide even more protection for these improvements, as well as others in the area. This objective has been combined with the biological need for providing habitat for fire dependent endangered, threatened and sensitive species in the area. These efforts have been well supported by local residents and cooperators.

The success the HMNF has achieved in balancing habitat requirements with the protection of residents and community assets is an example of local partnerships working for a common cause.



## New Engine Goes to Work in the Northeast

The Green Mountain-Finger Lakes National Forest welcomed a new Type 3 engine to its firefighting force this summer, greatly enhancing the Forest's ability to meet the National Fire Plan's goal of Preparedness and Hazardous Fuels Reduction.

The engine was acquired to support the Forest's fuels program on complex burns both on and off the Forest.

The engine and its crew have had a busy year, serving throughout the summer in suppression and prescribed fire efforts. They helped suppression efforts in Texas, Vermont, and New Hampshire. They supported an extensive prescribed fire program while in the Lone Star State, spending one month with the National Forests in Texas.

Back in the Northeast, the engine and crew assisted military installations in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Vermont with their prescribed fire efforts—making a total of four trips to three installations to burn seven units.

In addition to the land management benefits gained from prescribed fire, these trips serve as “train-the-trainer” exercises as the military continues to build their fire management programs. Sharing personnel, equipment, and expertise continues to foster greater partnerships in the Northeast.

When not on the fireline, the engine and crew has performed “lighter duty” in parades, where they help spread the National Fire Plan messages. The engine also served in a “Driving for the Fire Services” training session in New Hampshire.



*The Type 3 engine has proven invaluable on northeastern wildland fires where steep, remote mountains make water delivery more challenging.*

## Allegheny Snowmobile Trail Set to Reopen After Makeover



*Early winter riders will find that the Timberline snowmobile trail is nearing completion of a \$400,000 grant project.*

More than one-third of the Allegheny National Forest's Timberline ATV Trail has been refurbished in 2002 and trail riders are looking forward to its re-opening for winter riding on December 20. The trail, designed for riders at the beginner skill level, is a system of 38 miles of interconnecting trails traversing scenic, forested hills. Also during winter, this trail provides snowmobile access to the Allegheny Snowmobile Loop System

Using \$90,000 in funds provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources (DCNR) for contracted services and FS labor, gravel was overlaid and graded on more than 14 miles of the trail. Broad-based dips with lead-offs were dug where water drainage had been poor and the curve sections which get heavy abuse were restored.

With an early winter in the East, the Allegheny is anticipating heavy use by ATV and snowmobilers on this popular trail. The restoration project will be completed in 2003.





## Interagency Center Dedicated in Official Ceremony

On November 6, the Indiana Interagency Coordination Center was officially dedicated and showcased to the agencies that helped make the center a reality.

More than 50 people attended, including representatives from the National Park Service, U.S.D.I. Fish & Wildlife Service, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Rome (Indiana) Volunteer Fire Department, Perry County Emergency Management, Tell City Fire Department, Indiana Volunteer Firefighters' Association, and the Tell City Mayor's Office.

A short presentation and awards ceremony opened the dedication, and included remarks from Chris Peterson, Forest FMO of the Hoosier NF; Steve Creech, IDNR State Fire Supervisor; Doug Alexander, Assistant Regional Director of Fire/Aviation Management of the Midwest Region of the National Park Service; Bill Goffinett, Mayor of Tell City; and Ken Day, Hoosier NF Forest Supervisor.

Following the ceremony a luncheon was provided along with tours of the 5,000 square-foot facility. The Indiana Interagency Coordination Center came into existence in January 2001, with the National Fire Plan funding the new facility. The IICC was completed in August 2002.

The 2002 fire season saw the center process 115 resource orders mobilizing numerous overhead, engines, and eight Type 2 Interagency handcrews. IICC has been a positive success in the state of Indiana and will continue to grow and strengthen Interagency ties statewide.



*Interagency Engines pose for a group photo at the November dedication ceremony outside the IICC.*

## Wayne Employees Donate Record Amount to CFC



*Chad Wilberger presents the Wayne's contribution to CFC executive DeAnn Ballentine.*

Chad Wilberger was overwhelmed by the generosity shown by employees on the Wayne National Forest in donating a total of \$5,318.73 to the 2002 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) administered by the United Way.

"I never suspected we'd not only surpass our goal, but that we'd double what was raised in 2001," said Wilberger, who volunteered to coordinate the campaign on the Wayne NF this year. "The campaign's success exceeded anything I had hoped for."

Wilberger kicked off the campaign at an all-employee meeting on the forest. He appealed to the employees to support their favorite charitable organization and "be someone's hero" this year. Wilberger said he was impressed with the CFC's "employee-focused, cost-efficient and effective program to improve the quality of life for all. This is a program that touches lives in every walk of life in many unique ways."

He invited the local CFC coordinator in to share the benefits of giving and explain how to fill out the forms. He also showed a touching

video on the CFC. Wilberger quoted a Henry Ward Beecher saying: "In this world it is not what you receive but it is what you give that makes you rich."

He further explained, "By giving, no matter how great or small, employees can take part in enriching the lives of the people around them, perhaps even their own family and friends." The employees on the Wayne NF took his challenge seriously, and contributed generously. He noted that five employees pledged at least one percent of their base salary to help people they may never know.

"We're a small forest, but we're committed to serving people and caring about our communities, and that's obviously brought home in the success of this campaign," Wilberger noted.



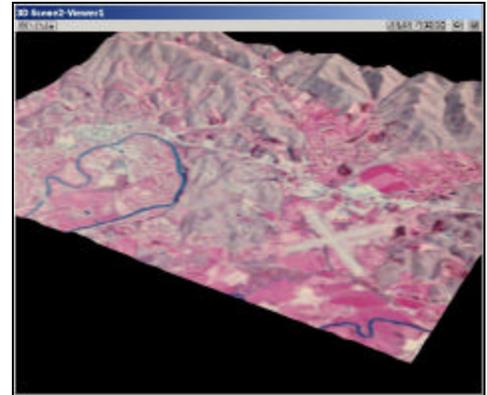
## Monongahela NF Celebrates GIS Day

On November 20, the Monongahela National Forest celebrated Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Day by hosting Elkins (West Virginia) High School science teacher Jay Dailer and 22 students from his 9th grade science class for a combined career day and hands-on GIS session.

The MNF Forest Planner Doug Adamo led the career day session by giving the students an overview of the Monongahela. MNF staffers Mike Owen (aquatic ecologist), Stephanie Connolly (soil scientist), and Leann Lesser (computer specialist) followed with their own experiences of working on the Monongahela NF and what it takes to become a professional in their field.

MNF GIS staff—composed of Sam Lammie, William Schauman, and Tim Brake—used Environmental Systems Research Institute’s (ESRI) ArcView GIS software to showcase geographic information system and real-world applications on the MNF. The students also had an opportunity to put ArcView to work. In one exercise students draped and rotated a three-dimensional view of a one-meter aerial photograph of the Elkins area over a 30-meter elevation model.

GIS Day is a grassroots event that formalizes the practice of geographic information systems users and vendors of opening their doors to schools, businesses, and the general public to showcase real-world applications of this important technology. The event is principally sponsored by the National Geographic Society, the Association of American Geographers, University Consortium for Geographic Information Science, the United States Geological Survey, The Library of Congress, Sun Microsystems, and ESRI.



*The Environmental Systems Research Institute's ArcView images gave the students a rare look at their hometown through a three-dimensional aerial snapshot.*

## Huron-Manistee Salutes Partners for Aid in Projects



*Forest Supervisor Jim Schuler (right) presents the “Excellence in Riparian Management” award to Mark Johnson of the Conservation Resource Alliance.*

Following a joint effort to improve fish habitat along the Manistee River, the Huron-Manistee National Forest recently presented an “Excellence in Riparian Management” award to the Conservation Resource Alliance.

Over the last two years, approximately 330 trees have been placed in the Manistee River below Hodenpyl Dam thanks to the efforts of the CRA, Michigan Department of Natural Resources—Fisheries Department, the HMNF and other partners.

The CRA was instrumental in procuring the helicopters needed to airlift whole trees into otherwise inaccessible areas along the river. This whole tree placement project would not have been undertaken without the CRA’s help.

Jim Schuler, Forest Supervisor on the HMNF, said this was an excellent example of the good work that can be accomplished when people unite behind a common cause.

“The CRA has consistently demonstrated its commitment to protecting the land, and working with community members to see that we preserve this heritage for future generations,” Schuler said.



## Lake Owen Excavation Yields Clues to the Past

Over the last two years, the USDA Forest Service conducted *Archaeological Excavation at the Boat Landing* on the Lake Owen Outlet of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. The project began in advance of a proposed boat-landing expansion at this multi-component site—consisting of a Native American occupation and a 1800s-era log dam.

The evaluation project was accomplished through the Forest's *Passport In Time* Volunteer Initiative, in partnership with Nicolet College (Rhineland) and Northland College (Ashland). The project leaders were Forest Archaeologist Mark Bruhy; Archaeologist and Paleo-Ethnobotanist Dr. Katie Egan-Bruhy, who also served as the instructor for both colleges; and Archaeological Technician and *Passport In Time* Coordinator Kim Potaracke.

One of the project's goals was to determine which areas had been disturbed by previous activity (by the dam, road, boat landing, picnic area, trail to boat landing, etc.), and what areas still contained undisturbed, pre-European contact site remains.

Early during the 2000-01 excavation, researchers found that part of the boat-landing area had been disturbed, and that there were intact site remnants in others. It was also determined through radiocarbon dating that the Native Americans who inhabited this location beginning 3,100 years ago continued on this site until contact with Europeans.

The concrete dam, a portion of a holding pond and the very narrow and straight sluiceway are all that remains where the Rust-Owen Dam once stood. Since the dam does not have what the law describes as "site integrity," it is believed to be ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places.



*This photo—taken in 1921—is the last surviving picture of the original Lake Owen Dam structure.*

The pre-European Native American component of the site however does have integrity and likely will be determined eligible and require management. That does not mean that the dam component will be forgotten. This location at a well-used boat landing on one of the most beautiful deep lakes in the area lends itself to being interpreted for the public.

In 1882, the Rust Owen Lumber Company built the dam at the outlet of Lake Owen. The sawmill was completed at Drummond in 1883. The flume at Lake Owen was built by John G. Riggs in 1885, and was actively used until 1902. In 1916, the Rust Owen logging camps began to transport logs via railroad. On November 7, 1930, the company paper mill closed after 48 years.

Thanks to existing photos taken at that time, it is known that the dam existed at the outlet until at least 1921. In 1931 along the shoreline to the east of where the dam was located there existed a controversial rock-filled dam that caused problems for landowners whenever lake levels fluctuated. In 1938, the Forest Service constructed a concrete drop inlet dam that still exists today.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources was an instrumental resource to getting documentation on the history of this dam. Frank Dallam of the DNR's Spooner office allowed the CNNF's Heritage Program Archaeological Technician Kim Potaracke to access the file and make copies of the information. State DNR reps scanned the original photos of the dam and sent them to Potaracke. CNNF employee Joan Cervenka located a key surveyor's map from May 1917 that shows the location of the three dams used by Rust Owen to push or flush the logs from Lake Owen via elevated flumes to the mill in Drummond.

Lake Owen was known as Long Lake until 1901 when the name was changed. However it is still listed as Long Lake on the 1906 plat map. A 1910 plat map shows no lake name. The name change was necessary because the state had an abundance of lakes named *Long Lake*, and the state asked for suggestions. *Lake Owen* was chosen because in 1873 John S. Owen was believed to be the first white man to see the lake. The original Indian name for the lake was *Kaginugumac*, *Kogenogumrug*, or *Kaginoguamaug*—meaning "Long Water Lake."



## Wayne SCSEP Goes Skydiving at 92



*Russell Saunders is back on solid ground after a successful landing following his inaugural skydiving experience at age 92.*

Russell Saunders will turn 93 in December.

While most men his age are taking it easy in retirement, Saunders is still working and seeking adventure.

He recently went skydiving for the first time.

Employed on the Wayne National Forest at the Ironton District in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), Saunders can always be counted on to come to work with a smile.

“He never hesitates to try something new and he’s like that Energizer bunny, he just keeps working and smiling,” says Mike Baines, Ironton District Ranger.

Saunders said skydiving was something he’d always wanted to try. He had heard that the Chesapeake, Ohio, Airport was offering people a chance to skydive.

“While most of us are content to be spectators for such things, not Russell, he decided to sign up and

give it a try,” Baines explained.

Professional skydivers were partnered with inexperienced rookies like Saunders. They went up in a little plane, and with a crowd of spectators including his fellow SCSEP enrollees and even a local TV station, Saunders jumped out of the plane and floated to earth.

“I wasn’t scared,” Saunders declared, “because the fellow that jumped with me has jumped about 900 times. It was fantastic!”

“My guess,” Baines said, “is that he had that big grin on his face all the way down.”

Saunders was certainly grinning broadly when he landed, and said it was a great experience. He said he’s thinking about doing it again.

“If I jump a couple more times with a buddy, they may let me jump by myself,” he said. “If so, I would get in the Guinness Book of World Records. I think the oldest person to jump was 86 years old.”

When Baines was asked about doing a success story on Saunders and his skydiving adventure, he quipped, “I’m not sure what the success would be; that he survived the experience or that he still has dreams and is accomplishing them.”

Saunders said he’s learned several things in life, including “Attitude of a person means almost everything in life. People need to get up in the morning and say what a wonderful day this is, and live for that day.”

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