

Resource Advisor – Final Report
WRANGLER FIRE

Kisatchie Ranger District, Kisatchie National Forest

October 25, 2010 18:00 hrs cdt

Memo To: xxx xxxxx Agency Administrator (Forest Supervisor, KIF),
Through xxx xxxxxxx Agency Administrator Representative (District Ranger, KRD)
From: Pete Irvine Wilderness Resource Advisor (THSP: READ-W)

Incident Summary

Incident Name: WRANGLER (Wildfire)

Incident Dates: October 13, 2010.....continuing.....

Incident Number: LA-KIF-011009 (P8FXB8)

Fire Location: KISATCHIE HILLS WILDERNESS (KHW), Kisatchie Ranger District,
Natchitoches Parish, 20 miles SSE of Natchitoches, Louisiana,
Southwest of I-49, Exit 119.

Incident Commander: Initial Attack (T5): xxx xxxxx 10/13
Type 3 (KIF): xxx xxxxx 10/14-10/16
Type 2(SAIMT): xxx xxxxx (Blue Team) 10/16-10/22
Type 3: xxx xxxxx 10/22-

Additional READ/THSP: xxx xxxxx ORA (Assistant Ranger), KRD.

Date/Time READ Arrived: 10/16/2010. Blue Team Delegation Letter 10/16.
Date/Time READ Released: 10/25/2010 Irvine. Xxx Xxxxx (KRD) is continuing.

Date/Time of Containment: 95% contained as of 10/25. Estimated 100% by 1900 on 10/31.
Date/Time of Control: No estimate.

Maps Used: USFS 7.5' Quads: Bayou L'Ivorgne, Cloutierville, Flora, Gorum,

Point of Origin: Lat: 31-30-30, Long: 93-4-0. Township 6 North, Range 6 West, Section 8,
near High Ridge Trail, within KHW.

Fire Cause: Lightning. Probable time: 20101012 @ 1545.

Size of Fire: 4,363 acres USFS Wilderness ~ 4,209 ac
USFS non-Wilderness ~ 100 ac
Private (multiple owners) ~ 54 ac.

Fire Progression

Oct 12, 15:45 hrs Tuesday Probable cause – lightning strike recorded.
Oct 13, ~ 14:00 hrs Wed Detected by LA-DAF, reported to KIF, KR D, <1 acre.
Oct 15, ~ 19:00 hrs Fri 105 ac
Oct 16, ~ 19:00 hrs Sat 640 ac
Oct 17, ~ 19:00 hrs Sun 1,191 ac
Oct 18, ~ 19:00 hrs Mon 2,917 ac
Oct 19, ~ 19:00 hrs Tues 3,617 ac
Oct 20, ~ 19:00 hrs Wed 3,802 ac
Oct 21, ~ 19:00 hrs Thurs 4,363 ac

Significant Events

Oct 13, Wed Fire is detected within Kisatchie Hills Wilderness at ~ 14:00 hours, initial response begins, Xxx Xxxxx (ICT5) is IAIC. Fire grows quickly from <1ac to >10 ac. Forest Supervisor issues 5100/5130 memo to District Ranger approving use of aircraft, chain saws, pumps, leaf blowers, and UTVs in KHW as needed to suppress Wrangler Fire. Bucket work by T3 helo.

Oct 14, Thur Incident transitions to local Type 3 organization with IC Xxx Xxxxx. Suppression efforts continue with limited success. Dozer line construction begins on FR 339 (Montrose Road) moving east towards USFS property corner (and KHW boundary), then on private lands under recent Wyden Agreements. Multiple loads of retardant applied by two T1 air tankers to slow fire spread. T1 helitanker arrives and begins work, in addition to T3 helo.

Oct 15, Fri KIF requests Type 2 Incident Management Team, continues T3 efforts.

Oct 16, Sat Blue Team (operating as T2 Team) inbriefs in morning, assumes fire at 19:00 hrs. Three airtanker drops between 18:15-19:00 hrs. Wilderness READ (Irvine) arrives at 12:00, after team inbrief. W-READ (THSP) meets DR and trainee W-READ (THSP) (Xxxxx) and inbriefs.

Oct 17, Sun W-READ learns of dozer incursion into Wilderness on 10/13 during initial attack, resulting in destruction of one property boundary (and KHW) corner and approximately 800-1000 linear feet of dozer line constructed within Wilderness, and approx. 500' of dozer tramming (travelling with blade raised) in KHW. All just east of Div C/D break, in Section 6.

Oct 18, Mon Wilderness-specific objective added to IAP. W-READ speaks at morning briefing on MIST, interacts at division breakouts. W-READs obtain KHW official legal description and map of record, and KIF Forest Fire Management Plan. W-READs respond to OPS request to scout existing dozer line in Div B around Longleaf Vista (Section 20) prior to cleaning out line with dozer as contingency line, as suggested by local personnel. W-READs find probable KHW incursion of approx. 400 linear feet near midpoint of 4200' dozer line constructed for prior wildfire and used recently for prescribed burning in the KHW.

Oct 19, Tues W-READs confirm prior KHW dozer incursion in Section 20. Document and mitigate – dozer will tram around incursion (outside of Wilderness) and clean out existing line (~ 3800') outside of KHW.

Oct 20, Wed In mid-afternoon, W-READs were tasked with developing the Rehab Plan for all aspects of the fire, with a goal of finalization by 10/22 at 0900. W-READS continued to interact with operations personnel at briefing and on the fireline.

Oct 21, Thur W-READs develop draft Rehab Plan with input from several Forest and District staff, and team overhead, by 13:00 hrs and circulate for comments. Comments due 19:00 hrs.

Oct 22, Fri W-READs finalize Rehab Plan and maps by 13:00 hrs, present to Forest Supervisor, Forest Fire Staff Officer, and District Ranger. Approval by FSupe at 14:30 hrs. Transition from T2 to T3 team at 17:00 hrs.

Oct 23, Sat W-READs distribute Rehab Plan and Maps, brief ops personnel, engage with ops personnel on rehab implementation. Xxx Xxxxxx assumes lead READ role as P.Irvine begins prep for W-READ closeout meeting with Forest and District personnel on 10/25 @ 14:00 at KRD work center in Provencal.

Oct 24, Sun Xxx Xxxxxx continues lead role with ops personnel. Takes recon helicopter flight with ICT3(t) and Div D. Irvine preps report for closeout.

Oct 25, Mon Xxx Xxxxxxx continues as READ. W-READ (Irvine) closeout with Forest and District personnel at Kisatchie RD work center at 14:00 hrs.

Summary of Use of Authorized Motorized Equipment and Mechanical Transport

Aircraft

Airtankers. 29,800 gallons of retardant.	2 T1 Airtankers (P3), multiple days. (Oct 14,15,16)
Helicopters. 151,420 gallons of water. (no landings or sling loads in KHW, no dip sites or helispots in KHW)	1 T1 Helitanker, 1 T3 Helo, multiple days. T1: Oct 14-20 or 21 T3: Oct 13-15. (Used for recon Oct 13-25).

Motorized Handtools (includes chain saws, leaf blowers, weed eaters)

Used by multiple crews on Divisions A, B, and D for multiple days. (Oct 13-25).

UTVs (total of 3 UTVs used on incident, vast majority of use on dozer lines and roads outside of KHW)

2 UTVs used on small portions of Divisions A and B for multiple days. Estimate less than 12 combined engine hours to total combined use within KHW, out of estimated total engine hours of 40+ on entire incident. (Oct 13-25).

Resources Threatened, Damaged, or Destroyed

- 24 Structures threatened along the wildland/urban interface on north and east sides of the fire (12 residences, 12 outbuildings), no structures destroyed. A significant portion of the KHW boundary is concurrent with USFS boundary – approximately 40% of KHW adjoins private lands.
- Red Cockaded Woodpecker habitat at risk. Several known nesting trees within the fire perimeter.
- Developed day-use recreation site at risk (Longleaf Vista).
- The Wilderness resource and the Wilderness character were at risk of diminution and degradation – potentially both by the fire and by the fire management actions. There was one unwarranted dozer incursion/intrusion into the KHW in Division D during initial attack on 10/14. Approximately 800-1000 feet of one-blade-wide dozer line was scraped, and an additional 600' of tramming with blade up occurred within KHW. This action also destroyed one surveyed USFS property/Wilderness corner monument. One proposed additional minor incursion into KHW to the northwest of Longleaf Vista was averted. Existing dozer fireline trespasses into KHW for approximately 400 feet.

Mitigation and Rehabilitation Completed During Fire Suppression Efforts

- District (KRD) and/or Forest (KIF) recognized the desirability and need for a Wilderness Resource Advisor (W-READ, THSP), for this Wilderness fire early on, engaged with the Regional Wilderness Program Manager, and had a non-local THSP with Wilderness experience assigned to the incident relatively quickly. KRD and KIF also formally assigned the local (KRD) Wilderness Manager as a dedicated W-READ Trainee. The Forest Recreation Program Manager (forest-level Wilderness Manager) was committed to the Blue Team, and the KRD Wilderness Manager is new in his position (< 1 year as ORA). The non-local W-READ is not currently line qualified (expired pack test).
- District and Forest are to be commended for developing Wyden Agreements with more than 20 adjoining private landowners for the purpose of constructing firelines for prescribed burning and for fire suppression. This fire is the first use (on-the-ground work) of the agreements, and they greatly facilitated dozer line construction to protect structures and private timber and agricultural lands, and greatly reduced time required to interact with adjacent landowners during the early stages of the fire.
- When District firefighters (dozer crew) recognized their dozer incursion on the northwest corner of the Wilderness (east of the Div C/D break), they quickly backed out of KHW, and informed fire overhead and the line officer.
- A request for use of certain mechanized equipment and motorized transport was made by KRD to KIF. The scheduled Acting Forest Supervisor approved the request on 10/13/2010. The one-sentence approval is simple and direct, but also somewhat broad and vague. There is no known documentation of the rationale for the request.
- Neither the District or the Forest informed either the incoming T2 IMT or the non-local W-READ of the known dozer incursion at either the Team inbriefing or the W-READ inbriefing. The W-READ was not on site for the team inbrief – arriving approximately 3 hours later. The W-READ was informed of the dozer incursion the next morning by local firefighters. This, coupled with other events including the proposed additional dozer work, led to a perception by the W-READ of incomplete information-sharing.
- The non-local W-READ has familiarity and experience with the Blue Team, and this helped with his transition into the fire organization, especially with operations and public information. Acknowledgement of the need to protect the Wilderness resource was formally added to the IAP as an Incident Objective on 10/18. The W-READs were asked to and provided input into the IAP daily, spoke at most morning briefings, and had ongoing effective interactions with team personnel throughout the incident.
- The W-READ, although housed in the Planning section of the IAP, technically works for the Agency Administrator's Representative (AAR), in this case the KRD District Ranger (AAR-t). The AAR and W-READ did not know each other prior to this fire, and effective communication, interactions and a working relationship between them took some time to develop. The AAR was dealing with a long-term, complex, major incident on his unit with very high local public interest, while the non-local W-READ did not know the history of the area, or local customs and practices.
- Throughout the incident, fireline supervisors and personnel were receptive to and engaged in protecting the Wilderness resource by practicing M.I.S.T (Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics) and practicing "Light Hand On The Land". By Sunday 10/17, these were formally discussed daily at briefing and were included in the IAP. Personnel practiced restraint and wise use of authorized

mechanical equipment and motorized transport, in all phases of their duties – line construction, mop-up, and rehabilitation.

- Fireline personnel began implementing the draft rehab plan on Thursday 10/21. By the time most non-local resources are demobed (on or about Thursday 10/28 or Friday 10/29) waterbars will be in place on all hand and dozer lines, portions of lines next to drains and streams will be mulched, handlines which are also trails will be narrowed-in, stumps will be flush cut, brush will be scattered to the extent possible, flagging will be pulled, and all lines and drop points will be litter-free.

Additional Rehabilitation Recommendations and Rationale

1. Seed, fertilizer, and mulch, as identified in the Rehab Plan, will be purchased and delivered as soon as possible, hopefully before 10/29. Actual seeding, fertilizing and mulching will be done when determined by local personnel to maximize the chances for germination and soil stabilization. Currently, the fire is still active, and open firelines are needed for mop-up and patrol. This may be the case for several weeks.
2. An additional seeding of much of the dozer lines in the spring is identified as a possibility in the plan. Seed should be purchased soon and stored at KRD for this possibility.
3. Local personnel should ensure that the Rehab Plan is followed in its entirety, and engage with the adjoining publics to ensure their buy-in and satisfaction. Any changes to the Rehab Plan should be discussed and formally documented.

Additional Considerations and Recommendations

(Note: some of these considerations and recommendations go beyond the immediate scope of the W-READ report for the Wrangler Fire. They are meant to be constructive, not fault-finding).

- A. Consider issuing an updated Forest Supervisor approval letter as soon as possible, documenting the need for continued use of certain mechanical transport and motorized equipment. Suggested text is in Attachment A.
- B. The District should continue to minimize use of the temporarily approved general prohibitions on mechanical equipment and motorized transport. As soon as it is safe to discontinue their use for the expressed purpose of suppressing the Wrangler Fire, all use should cease. The Forest Supervisor should document the date this occurs in another letter, and include the 2320 file code, along with 5100/5130. This memo should be kept in the permanent files for KHW. It is NOT appropriate to assume that the authorization is valid until the fire is either 100% contained or controlled. The need for continued use of each type of authorized exception should be analyzed daily by the READ and the AAR.
- C. It took considerable time to assemble several needed W-READ documents. While the Kisatchie Forest Plan was available immediately to the W-READ, the KIF Fire Management Plan, and the Legal Description and Map of Record for KHW were not. There was considerable confusion about the exact boundaries of the KHW, and general unfamiliarity with how to obtain the current KIF FMP, and the LD/MOR. It would be beneficial for involved District and Forest personnel to have a working knowledge of these documents, and to have them readily available at both District and Forest offices. It is highly probable that a scenario similar to the Wrangler Fire will occur in KHW sometime in the future, and these documents will be needed quickly.

- D. The versions of the FMP provided to the W-READ by local personnel were not current. The current approved FMP, dated February 2005, was provided to the W-READ by a previous forest contractor; as were the “draft” KHW revisions or amendments or additions or changes to the KIF FMP.
- E. The W-READ was repeatedly assured that the KIF was honoring and implementing the revisions (or amendments or additions or changes) to the 2005 FMP. However, there appears to be incomplete and/or differing interpretations of what those actually are. Everyone working from the same base, approved documents is critical for success.
- F. The W-READ received the KHW official Legal Description (signed by the Regional Forester in 1990) from one source, and the Map Of Record from another. Official copies of these two key and related documents should be kept in the official, paper, permanent 2320 files in both the S.O. and the Ranger Station. The KRD permanent file on KHW does not contain a copy of the map.
- G. Re-sign the entire boundary of KHW (not just the portion impacted by fire and identified in the Rehab Plan) in accordance with the Interim I&E Plan in the District permanent 2320 files, particularly the section from the northwest corner southward roughly paralleling FR 339. The proposed KHW boundary adjustment may never occur, and identifiable boundary is needed. There will never be a better time to re-sign the boundary and replace missing and unreadable signs. The regional guideline is walking and re-signing the boundary every five years.
- H. Increased awareness and understanding of the KHW and its stewardship by a broader group of both District and Forest personnel would be beneficial. There are several options for accomplishing this.
 - i. Wilderness awareness programs for District and Forest personnel. This can be as simple as a 1-hour session tagged on to a safety meeting or other routine meeting including a presentation followed by questions-and-answers. Also informing and encouraging a variety of personnel to take one or more of the online 2-hour trainings developed by the Arthur Carhart Interagency Wilderness Training Center (ACIWTC). Also increasing awareness of www.wilderness.net, the interagency Wilderness website.
 - ii. Providing opportunities for the District ORA (Wilderness Program Manager), District Ranger, Forest Recreation Program Manager, Forest Recreation Staff Officer, and Forest Supervisor to learn and focus more on Wilderness. Options include in-person ACIWTC Trainings – there is one for Line and Staff Officers, offered once annually in the U.S., and several for District and Forest Wilderness Managers – offered sporadically in various locations. Also encouraging the District and Forest Wilderness Managers to become members of SWAG – the Southern Wilderness Advisory Group (2-year term).
 - iii. Walking the walk. This phrase refers to a forest-wide culture of recognition of and support for the KHW, and Wilderness stewardship. It refers to changing from a minimal acceptance of Wilderness as a requirement, to a working-level understanding and willingness to invest in Wilderness stewardship as an integral part of the USFS mission.
 - iv. The Forest Wilderness Manager is the official INFRA Wilderness Data Steward. The Forest and District Wilderness Managers should engage together in working to meet the agency’s Ten-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge (10YWSC) (a/k/a: multi-year Wilderness required Target) and completing annual required InfraWILD Upward Reporting. Line Officers and Staff Officers should have a good working awareness of 10YWSC, which will eventually become the basis for annual Wilderness funding.

- v. Develop Traditional Tools and Leave-No-Trace Outdoor Ethics skills. Each unit with Wilderness needs at least two personnel certified in crosscut saw operations and willing to use crosscuts and axes; as well as a Wilderness tool and equipment cache.
 - vi. Consider applying for Region 8 Wilderness Challenge funding to accomplish agreed-upon Wilderness goals including, but not limited to, advancing the 10YWSC.
 - vii. Consider utilizing skilled detailers, partners, and hosted programs to advance your Wilderness stewardship goals. Possibilities include western smokejumpers who are Crosscut C Sawyers for trail mtnce and fireline prep, SCA interns to do Wilderness overnight site inventories or NNIS inventories and control or several types of monitoring.
 - viii. Cultivate volunteer partners, if possible, for Wilderness stewardship work, including trail maintenance. Consider providing crosscut saw training and certification on a recurring basis to interested employees and partners.
- I. Remove all blazes from all trails within KHW. USFS policy requires no blazing of any kind within Wilderness – paint, metal, plastic, axe, etc. Certain types of signage are acceptable.
- J. KHW is well signed along Longleaf Trail and the southern end of FR339 (Montrose Road). Consider additional “portal” or “wilderness entrance” type signage along the north end of FR339.

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I have enjoyed my assignment as Technical Specialist (THSP) – Wilderness Resource Advisor (W-READ) on the Wrangler Fire. I particularly appreciated the ongoing assistance of XXX XXXXX and XXX XXXXX. I learned a lot, and hope that I have fulfilled my duty to “*identify and evaluate potential impacts and benefits of fire operations on natural and cultural resources*”, and to “*help to implement the directions and standards that the Agency Administrator sets for the IMT.*” (NFES 1831)

I encourage the continued assignment of XXX XXXXX or another local resource as THSP / READ for the duration of the incident, especially as long as non-local resources are assigned. I also encourage you to provide the Regional Wilderness Program Manager (current: Xxx Xxxxx, incoming: Xxx Xxxxx) with regular updates.

If you have any questions, or if I can be of assistance in any way, please feel free to contact me.

/s/ *Pete Irvine*

PETER B. IRVINE

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cc: (several – District, Forest, Region, Team)

APPENDIX A: Suggested text for Forest Supervisor approval for continued use of certain mechanical equipment and motorized transport in KHW during the Wrangler Fire.

(KIF Informal Letterhead)

File Code: 5100/5130/2320

Subject: Updated Authorization for Certain Equipment on Wrangler Fire in
Kisatchie Hills Wilderness.

To: Xxx Xxxxx, Kisatchie District Ranger

This memo updates my approval for the use of certain mechanical transport and motorized equipment within the Kisatchie Hills Wilderness for the suppression of the Wrangler Fire, dated October 13, 2010.

Use of the previously authorized aircraft, chain saws, pumps, leaf blowers, and UTVs may continue for the purpose of the suppression of the fire, to provide for the safety of the public and firefighters. Use must continued to the monitored and limited to the minimum needed to safely suppress the fire.

Aerial application of retardant should only be done when lives or private property values are at risk.

I consider hand-held mechanized weeders to have been included in my initial authorization, and also in this authorization.

You should analyze the need for continued use of each type of equipment daily, plan to discontinue use at the earliest possible date (giving full consideration to firefighter safety), and ensure that discontinuation of each type of use is documented.

Xxx Xxxxx
Forest Supervisor

cc: Forest Fire Staff Officer
Forest FMO