**Marbleyard Fire Summary**

June 2002, George Washington & Jefferson National Forests

**Background:**

* Location: James River Face Wilderness, 8900 ac. Popular trail network for day hiking, backpacking, and equestrians, including Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Popular and highly visible geologic feature – the Devil’s Marbleyard; 8-10 acre fully exposed rock/boulder field along Belfast Trail. Nearby communities include Glasgow, Natural Bridge Station, Lynchburg, Lexington. James River is popular with rafters and canoeists. Major roadways include US 501, I-81.
* Fire Size: 2935 acres. 4 divisions; 3 divisions in Wilderness.
* Ignited by Lightning, June 5. Became part of a complex of 3 fires (Chicken 6/5, Kennedy 6/11). Chicken Fire was the initial suppression priority. Type 2 IMT from 6/14 to 6/22. On 6/14, both Chicken (740 ac) and Kennedy (12 ac) were contained. Marbleyard was at 450 acres.
* No allowance for Wildland Fire Use or anything other than full suppression in the George Washington Forest Plan (FLMP) (revised 1993), no approved WFU plan in place.
* WFSA alternative selected: Aggressive suppression to contain fire on west side of Balcony Falls Ridge, east of FR 781, and north of the Belfast Trail.
* Significant Safety Concerns:
  + High amounts of Gypsy Moth (gypmo) mortality – dead/down fuels, snags.
  + Remote, rugged country; 3-4 mile one way hike to fireline.
  + 2 medevacs and several personal injuries.

**Significant Impacts:**

* Red fire retardant residue on Marbleyard quartzite, well-known and visible landscape feature.
* Motorized Transport and Mechanical Equipment Use: chainsaws, brushcutters, ATVs.
* Helispot construction – 1 acre clearcut.
* 1 mile of steep handline construction.
* Chainsaw snagging in all divisions – cutting on the green side.
* “Improving” of firelines – brushcutting.
* Large scale aerial burnout.

**Lessons Learned:**

* Get involved in the WFSA development if possible to ensure Wilderness values are adequately considered.
* Keep abreast of plans for the next shift. Attend planning meetings or communicate your concerns to the District Ranger or Incident Commander beforehand.
* Listen, ask questions, seek alternatives, don’t dictate.
* Size up the fire and request help – in most cases you need at least one READ per division.
* Make sure you get Wilderness objectives and key messages into the IAPs (hit MIST often).
* Attend morning briefings and have a message ready.
* Cover your area – be visible.

**Marbleyard Fire Rehabilitation Plan, 10 pages, key points:**

* Waterbar all handlines greater than 15% grade.
* Rehab handlines by raking disturbed soil and debris into the line.
* Flush cut all tree stumps as low as possible to the ground.
* Scatter bucked pieces and cut brush out of sight of trails.
* Spread dirt on all stumps and visible cut ends.

**Marbleyard Fire Progression:**

6/5-7: 15 acres 6/14: 1100 ac

6/8: 85 ac 6/15: 1170 ac

6/9: 455 ac 6/16: 1740 ac

6/10: 717 ac 6/17: 2208 ac

6/11: 947 ac 6/18: 2935 ac