

## Germany - Fire Demonstration Project

**Discussion:** Rex Alford, BLM Colorado State Office and Mike Rieser, Craig, Colorado BLM Field Office traveled to the University of Freiburg in Freiburg, Germany April 21-May 1, 2000. IP had received a request from Dr. Johann Goldammer, Director of the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) located at the University of Freiburg for BLM to make a presentation at the university to an international group of university students and fire managers interested in learning about fire management in the U.S.



GFMC lawn - Fire Shelter Demo  
(Mike up-front)



Johann, Andrey Eritsov (Russia)  
Mike and Rex.



Johann (left) with group.  
Mike & Rex in blue shirts.



Instructor Mike

Rex and Mike provided an overview of basic fire training, fire planning, prescribed fire, and long range weather prediction to the participants. Their presentations were well received and provided a basis for discussions about applying fire management techniques used in the developed world in developing countries.

Rex and Mike had an opportunity to visit the GFMC. The GFMC is a part of the Fire Ecology Research Group at the University. The primary interest of the GFMC is to provide a central point for information on global fire activity. Information on the GFMC program is available on the Internet at the following address. <http://www.uni-freiburg.de/fireglobe>

Another area of interest of the Fire Ecology Research Group and the GFMC is in the arena of international fire support. There is a perceived need by Dr. Goldammer and others, for an international group to provide support for developing countries and for countries with long fire return interval regimes that do not have standing fire suppression resource capabilities. The GFMC envisions developing an operational and technical support capability for these countries during periods of high fire activity when requested. During March of 2000, Dr. Goldammer joined a group of fire specialists from South Africa and the U.S., in Ethiopia to provide the Government of Ethiopia with advice during a severe drought induced fire season. Dr. Goldammer has suggested this effort as a model for future responses. There is some United Nations support for this concept.



On the last two days of their stay, Rex and Mike had the opportunity for field visits. On the first day they observed an area where prescribed fire was being reintroduced into Germany. On the second day, they toured restoration and recovery efforts in an area of the Black Forest that sustained a severe blow down event in December 1999.

The following notes are from their field visits:

Fire has been banned in Germany since 1975. The rapid socioeconomic changes in post-World War II Europe enforced this development. New air quality standards were generated by the generally prevailing opinion of government administrations, the general public, and traditional nature conservation philosophies. These opinions were that fire would damage ecosystem stability and biodiversity. This led to fire bans in most European countries. In 1975, following the Federal German Nature Conservation Law, the State of Baden Württemberg imposed a ban of the free burning (broadcast burning) of vegetation.

On April 29 we viewed test plots where prescribed fire had been used on an experimental basis to clear terraced slopes in vineyards. Due to the constraints on burn windows the burns lacked intensity to achieve the percent mortality on hardwood species invading the terrace slopes. Several options were discussed to overcome burn window requirements and meet burn objectives. If these objectives can be met, the use of prescribed fire is currently being reconsidered for agricultural use in vineyards. We also observed the problems faced by German foresters in a Black Forest blowdown area. The primary

issues were to mitigate insect infestation and decrease the potential of disease generated by downed timber. The foresters were also very interested in moving forest stands from single species patches to a general mixed and variable stand composition. One of the techniques used to reduce vector issues was to harvest and peel merchantable timber.

**Recommendations/Follow up Actions:** This activity raised the issue of what role the United States wishes to play in international fire suppression efforts. Although BLM does not have the lead on the decisions as an organization, it may be requested to provide inputs into the discussions and at times be asked to provide employees and resources to such efforts. There are many issues associated with this potential activity including working with international partners on international assignments who have different skills, training, and competencies. IP will work



with counterparts in the Forest Service and with the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance to provide inputs into these on going issues.

Life is good!