

Synopsis 2001

The BLM Training Unit at NIFC wants to keep you informed about a new informal program we're setting up. Through numerous personal contacts and surveys, it is obvious to us that achieving certification for many prescribed fire positions can be pretty difficult. The classroom training is plentiful, but on-the-job training opportunities aren't. Some of the challenges people confront are: lack of a well-developed local burn program, lack of complexity level one burns, lack of opportunities to burn locally, and lack of required NEPA documentation resulting from lack of resource staff priorities. In some cases, people are taking too much time to complete task books (or not completing them at all within 3 years). In other cases, people need to develop skills and abilities not related to a task book, such as burn plan preparation including: prescription development, objective writing, smoke management, etc. We feel a mechanism is needed to allow people in BLM Fire to gain experience through working on projects in different areas with more qualified and experienced individuals.

What the BLM Training Unit at NIFC would like to do is coordinate prescribed fire opportunities for BLM employees who are currently finding it difficult to find the right kinds of assignments to meet their needs. This office will need to work closely with the trainees and their supervisors, the hosting units, and State Fuels Specialists. In some cases, units are already working with neighboring units and interagency cooperators, but there are many opportunities being missed for additional on-the-job training experience. We view this program as augmenting, not competing with, both the Prescribed Fire Training Center in Florida and the Fire Use Training Academy in New Mexico. We feel there are many opportunities available that don't involve a 2-month commitment or travel to the southeastern U.S., and we want to help make those opportunities available.

From a trainee standpoint, we need to identify what specific type(s) of experience individuals need and when they will be available. Length of assignment would be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on individual needs. From a hosting unit standpoint, we need to identify areas with strong programs and highly qualified personnel in place where trainees can be assigned to receive the right kind(s) of experience. State Fuels Specialists would be key contacts for us in providing work plans and local unit contacts. National Office 2823 funding would be provided to cover salary and per diem if necessary.

We feel this can be a win/win program for BLM Fire, with hosting units gaining additional personnel to work on projects and sending units gaining valuable experience for their employees. We welcome your constructive comments and support.