

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

Topic: Fire Operations

1. What are the timing restrictions under Wildland Fire Use guidance in the Southwest? Time of Season: June is an unpredictable time with weather/moisture. How was this justified?

Every individual fire that has the potential to be placed in Wildland Fire Use (WFU) status is assessed with regard to seasonal severity at the time. The previous fall and winter were dry. However, there had been a good snowfall in March that had moderated the drought, and there had been some recent rain events. A quarter inch of rain was received with the thunder storm that started the Warm Fire. We knew that the next few weeks would likely be dry and that the coming weather would need to be evaluated as the fire progressed.

2. What was the fire weather forecast the two days before the fire blew up?

The weather forecast on June 23 (forecasting for June 24) called for mostly sunny, 80-88 degrees, minimum humidity of 8%, light and variable wind becoming NE around 10 mph in late morning and afternoon.

3. If the dead trees fall in place, they may burn with extreme severity. How seriously do you rate that risk?

The standing dead trees will fall over time. This will increase fuel loading in many of the fire areas. It will take 10-20 years for many of the trees to fall so this is not an immediate problem. We are assessing areas within the Warm Fire for this risk, and some salvage logging may take place to reduce future fuel problems. Other areas may be treated with prescribed fire over time.

4. What lessons were learned from the Warm Fire?

We have conducted an After Action Review on the Warm Fire. We are in the process of preparing a document that will cover the findings from the review. This document will be available to the public.

5. What is the origin of the name "Warm Fire"?

The fire was named after Warm Springs Canyon, the mouth of which is located near the start of the fire.

6. People were trapped at the Grand Canyon Lodge and Kaibab Lodge. During the evening burn phase, Highway 89A was closed for at least 12 hours. Road closures were without permission/authorization from ADOT. Why?

Traffic was delayed at various times throughout the Warm Fire incident to provide for public safety. Highway 67 was closed to the public on the 25th due to

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

the hazard of fire activity and the danger of falling snags. These actions were coordinated with ADOT. Our records show the following:

Highway 89A was closed on June 20 for 5 hours. It was also closed on June 23 at 11 am and opened June 24 at 6:30 pm. Highway 67 was closed on June 25 at 10:30 am and opened July 3 at 8 am.

7. In the last 4 to 5 years, how many management fires have become out of control, and how many acres have been lost as a result?

No previous WFU fire on the Kaibab NF has been converted to a suppression fire.

8. Dr. Covington and others have established that Native Americans managed the forest using "cool season" fire tactics. Your explanation of WFU ignores that fact. Why?

This was discussed with Dr. Covington, and that is not his position. He feels that Native Americans were burning at various times throughout the year, with a resulting variety of effects.

9. What is the education of the FS directors of the North Kaibab at the time of the fire?

The District Ranger has a BS in Forest Management.

10. Black needles are a very poor indicator of fire severity. Soil conditions, char and consumption of heavy fuels are much accurate. Why use these inaccurate indicators?

An initial assessment of fire severity was conducted with regard to soil impacts and potential erosion. If the burned areas had a green canopy intact, that was considered to be low severity. If brown needles were still in place, that was rated as moderate. The reason for this is that those needles will fall, providing a ground cover that lessens rainfall impacts. If needles were completely burned away, that was considered to be high severity.

11. The agency's distinction between the management and wildfire phases seems artificial to many people. People are disturbed about the practice of allowing WFU fires in hot, dry conditions. Is this bad ecology and bad judgment?

The official definition of a wildfire is an unplanned, unwarranted wildland fire, including unauthorized human-caused fires, escaped wildland fire use events, escaped prescribed fire projects, and all other wildland fires where the objective is to put the fire out.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

The definition of a Wildland Fire Use fire is the application of the appropriate management response to naturally-ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined designated areas outlined in fire management plans.

12. The Brins Fire in Sedona, Arizona, pre-dated the Warm Fire. Perhaps you could clarify those dates? Equipment was committed to the Sedona fire, and yet the Warm Fire was allowed to burn. Why?

The Brins Fire started on June 18th. The Brins Fire was utilizing a significant number of resources. This did reduce the availability of resources to the Warm Fire. This was being evaluated during the Warm Fire. However, it likely should have had greater impact when considering the continuation of the WFU management of the fire.

13. My understanding is that WFU fires are allowed to burn when the district has the resources to control the fire. There were not sufficient resources at the time of the fire. Why was the burn area extended during a time of 8% Relative Humidity and 35 mph winds?

Please see the previous answer with regard to adequate resources. The MMA (Maximum Manageable Area) was expanded due to a variety of reasons. Current and forecasted weather were considered. In hindsight, forecasted weather should have been more closely considered when expanding the MMA.

14. We were on the Kaibab WFU for 10 days prior to the “blow-up.” Fire crews from Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Colorado, and other areas, all stated there was too much fuel in the forest, not enough crews to handle the perimeter of the fire, and insufficient water supply. Why was this fire allowed to burn until the inevitable?

The folks that you talked with had legitimate concerns. However, these concerns were being evaluated on a daily basis. Line resources often do not have the bigger picture, and do not realize the considerations that are being made at the higher levels.

15. The Pinon-Junipers on the west side of the fire had extensive grass stands with close spacing between trees. The growth from the trees reached the ground fuels. How could you not expect it to explode under Red Flag conditions?

Possibly you mean the east side of the fire? PJ is not prevalent on the west side of the fire. It was anticipated that as the fire spread further to the east, with lower elevation, that the fuels would become sparse and the fire would die out. We fully anticipated that some portions of the more dense stands of PJ would be stand replacement fire. PJ generally does not burn at all, or it burns completely under certain conditions.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

- 16.** The fire was consuming heavy fuels (to ash). It was obviously killing large areas of tall trees. There were severe ground fire characteristics on the west side of highway 67. Why not suppress the fire?

The majority of fire effects on the west side of Highway 67 during the WFU portion of the fire were very desirable from a fire ecology standpoint. There were areas of higher intensity and severity. WFU is not a precise treatment. A variety of effects has to be expected. It is different from a prescribed burn in that you do not set a prescription under which to operate from. WFU events generally occur over a period of time, and on some days, there will be higher intensity with the resultant impacts. The intent is to try and return the natural role of fire.

- 17.** The public was under a complete fire prohibition (Fire Restrictions). The Fire Danger signs showed the fire risk at HIGH. It is not true that the conditions were Moderate. Why do you make this claim?

The North Kaibab Ranger District went into campfire restrictions on June 1. We take a number of considerations into account when putting restrictions in place. Having them in place is considered when deciding to use WFU or not, however, it does not eliminate the option. The fire danger signs on the North Kaibab Ranger District may have said HIGH at the outset of the Warm Fire. They may not have been downgraded to reflect the latest conditions. Our fire danger ratings are based on Energy Release Component (ERC). Records show that the ERC had taken a dip (which correlated to the recent precipitation) at the beginning of the Warm Fire. The ERC was in the moderate level at that time for the North Kaibab Ranger District.

- 18.** When we were already in extreme drought conditions, why did the Forest Service let the Warm Fire burn? Why did the FS let it get out of control so many times?

At the beginning of the Warm Fire, the drought had been moderated by the late winter snows and recent rainstorms. Fire behavior was very desirable for the first week or so of the WFU event. After that, fire behavior was more of a mixed severity but overall, still desirable from a WFU standpoint. When considering WFU, it is somewhat of a balancing act. If the fire behavior is simply creeping through the needles, it is not really accomplishing anything. It is not reducing fuels to any significant extent, nor is it raising the canopy of the overstory trees. On the other hand, you do not want significant amounts of crown fire or total canopy scorch. On the balance, much of the WFU event was between these two extremes. See also the responses to questions 1 and 16.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

- 19.** I believe forest conditions on the Kaibab at the time of the fire were such that a prescribed fire or WFU fire should not have been started. If that is true, why was this fire allowed to burn under those very same conditions?

Please see the response in question 18.

- 20.** The fire management plans changed as the Warm Fire continued to increase in size. It seems that the plan was simply to chase the fire, not manage it.

Fire management plans need to change and adapt to the changing conditions of a fire. This is the nature of fire management.

- 21.** Why was it not suppressed when you were not able to control it? You waited too long.

The draft MMA did change on two separate occasions. This was identified in the After Action Review as a problem area. In hindsight, the draft MMA should have only been changed to respond to meeting established objectives. Also, the question of whether to suppress the fire should have been more closely considered in the later part of the WFU event. These issues will be documented in the After Action Review.

- 22.** It is an established fact that this WFU was an artificially managed situation. Why would a decision be made to manage this fire? The USFS already admits that the week was historically fire-prone for the year, with 10 years of drought and windy conditions.

Please see responses to questions 1, 16, and 18.

- 23.** The microburst occurred on Sunday. No helicopters were in use that day, and fire crews were being changed out. If the fire was still hot, and it was, why were crews not still on duty and helicopters in use? All fire equipment was committed to the Sedona (Brins) Fire. Why was the WFU management action taken?

Fire resources were taking holding actions along road 224 on June 25. As the day progressed, fire activity quickly overcame their capabilities. It could be argued that there was not a sufficient amount of resources along road 224, but there were resources there with the intent of holding the fire to the north side of the road.

- 24.** Why did this action proceed when adequate communication facilities were not in place? It was stated by FS managers that cellphone and radio communications were inadequate. They were unable to report wind conditions

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

adequately. Why were they ever considering such a huge action, without adequate communication facilities?

There were difficulties with communications at the outset of the WFU event. These were identified and sufficiently mitigated. Within the first week, these issues were resolved.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

Topic: Forest Management

1. How many dollars to rehabilitate the burned area (58,000 acres)?

The estimate at this time is \$311,000.

2. Will a BAER Report be prepared for WFU Fire?

No, BAER funds are not available for WFU.

3. Kaibab Camper Village and North Rim Country Store both lost in excess of \$50,000 due to fire road closures. Our Interruption of Business insurance will only cover a small part of this (we did not have direct fire damage on the property). Does the Forest Service have a department where we can file for reimbursement of our losses?

You can file a claim. Contact us for the proper forms.

4. The rains came weeks early; it was purely good luck that 10 times the present acreage did not burn. How could you (Forest Service) take this risk?

Please see previous discussions as to the decisions made to utilize WFU. There are no options for reducing fuels on the Kaibab Plateau without some risk. Doing nothing is also taking a considerable risk. That would be the "Hope" strategy -- hope that we could continue to put out every fire before they get very large.

5. Several "high-use" areas (Jolly Sink, Billy Sink, Glen Lake, and Joes Mud Hole) were burned. Will any attempt be made to restore visual quality to the area?

Those areas that are within the suppression portion of the fire are currently being evaluated for possible restoration efforts.

6. What are the USFS plans to prevent another catastrophic loss of resources?

We have conducted an After Action Review and plan to utilize the lessons learned from that effort in future WFU events.

7. If you cannot afford to maintain the forest with your current resource and budget, why does the agency use no commercial logging to help thin out the forest?

We are currently utilizing commercial logging to thin the forest. We need to do more. It has been difficult getting projects through our processes due to individuals and groups filing appeals and litigation. We are continuing to propose and implement thinning projects.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

8. The fire did not blow-up in the mixed conifer. The run started in the PJ (along the Eastside Game road) and the ponderosa (on the east side of the fire) fuels. Why are you giving the impression that it happened in the mixed conifer?

The fire spotted across road 224 on the 25th, at both the top and bottom of the hill. It did spot into the PJ and pine, and then quickly transitioned into the mixed conifer. The vast amount of the blow up did occur in mixed conifer.

9. The ecological damage even on large areas of the management phase is worse than that of destructive logging practices. Does this not violate the intent of NEPA, ESA, and other Forest Service policies?

No, it did not.

10. If the budget is so low, why take the risk of this kind of fire?

Our annual operating budget is not sufficient to treat the thousands of acres that need treatment with mechanical thinning or prescribed burning. WFU is an option for potentially treating many acres with dollars that come out of a national fund.

11. The local residents just want assurance that hot weather/dangerous condition burns will not be attempted. Can the Forest Service give us this assurance?

We absolutely intend to learn from the lessons of the Warm Fire. We will do the best that we can when evaluating WFU opportunities in the future.

12. What was the cost (\$) of containing the Warm Fire? Did it come from your budget?

The Warm Fire cost approximately \$8 million. The costs of the Warm Fire were paid out of a national fire suppression budget.

13. If we can spend \$8,000,000 containing a fire, why is it so hard to get a budget to maintain a healthy forest?

Congress allocates federal budgets. We have no control over budget amounts.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

Topic: Public Concerns

1. From the very beginning, private citizens were able to predict the fire's outcome and the USFS could not. Local citizens tried very hard to give advice and warning about the conditions, but the USFS did not listen. Why?

We certainly appreciate that there are local citizens with extensive knowledge of the Kaibab Plateau and its history. Our job is to use all of the knowledge and input that we can gather and develop our best strategy. Please understand that for any given action that we propose, it is very likely that someone will be opposed to it. We have to use all of the information that we have available to us and try to discern the best course of action. Sometimes we may still make mistakes.

2. Why did the agency ignore the experience of local residents? Does the agency have an over-positive attitude about fire effects?

Please see the above answer.

3. Is there anything a concerned citizen can do to block frivolous lawsuits by extreme environmentalists?

We highly suggest that you become involved in the process for commenting that is available to everyone. We certainly could use the support from local communities for our proposed projects.

4. Why do you (Forest Service) think the people of Southern Utah, Arizona, etc., have such a low opinion of your (Forest Service) activities?

We understand that there is some history involved with people's impressions of the Forest Service. There have been some difficult times. We hope that we can make a difference and affect people's opinions of the Forest Service.

5. No one from the USFS has offered an apology for this obvious error in judgment. Why is that? If you defend the decision, it will happen again.

We regret the outcome of the Warm Fire. The Warm Fire did not achieve the end result desired by Kaibab National Forest managers. It burned at a higher intensity than was desired and burned about 40,000 acres beyond the boundary set for it. We recognize that we need to learn from the Warm Fire and incorporate those lessons into our future WFU program.

6. FS press release denied soil sterilization and other high to moderate severity effects that occurred on the majority of the acreage burned. This hurts the agency's credibility with informed people. Are you aware of this spin information distributed to the public?

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

If the intent of the question is to propose that now the soils are sterilized to a point that things will not grow there, we would disagree with the proposition. Please take a look even in the high severity portion of the wildfire. Grass, forbs, and trees are all coming back.

7. Can man make a forest? (A forest, as one, would have been found before the arrival of man to North America.)

No, we cannot fully restore the forest to the conditions prior to the arrival of man to North America.

8. Are you selecting to answer only questions that will reflect well on the USFS, or will you answer all questions?

Hopefully, everyone will see that we are trying to answer all of your questions.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

Topic: Timber Management

1. When will the burned area be open for firewood gathering?

The Warm Fire area is closed to firewood gathering to protect public safety. We will reopen to firewood cutters as soon as possible.

2. How fast can timber salvage get started?

We are currently working through the environmental analysis process to assess the effects of salvage logging. We hope to be starting with salvage operations by the fall of 2007.

3. I think that loggers should be allowed to thin forests to remove mature trees. This would result in less fire hazards. Allowing mature trees to burn is pure wastage of the natural resources. Please explain why logging is not allowed.

Logging is allowed and is a valuable tool for improving forest conditions. It is not the only answer though. The scale of the problem of thick, overgrown forests on the Kaibab Plateau is too large to handle with logging only. There simply is not enough capacity within the region to deal with the problem in the timeframe that is necessary.

4. Logging could provide precise treatment on a tree-to-tree basis. Why does the agency refuse to use this risk management tool?

Please see the above answer.

5. The logging industry would be perfectly glad to treat all the acres you want to treat in a short time. Are you talking to the logging industry about this?

We have had conversations with the logging industry. Please see the response to question 3.

6. Most of the ecologically-successful portion of the fire occurred on formerly logged areas. Long fire suppression has created huge fuel loading. How can fires, in this entirely artificial fuel environment, be considered ecologically natural?

Present fuel conditions are outside of a natural range of variability, due primarily to a lack of fire. Even so, fire under the right conditions can be an effective tool for helping restore these areas to a more natural state. The answer is not to exclude fire even more, and create even worse conditions.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

7. The USFS is responding to pressure from lawsuits by liberal ecological organizations against logging. Thinning could be done by industry, within federal statutes, and solve whatever thinning issues exist. So is the answer to burn the thing to the ground?

Please see the response to question 3.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

Topic: Watershed & Soil

1. Deep washes have been cut in many of the burned drainages. These create a new stabilization level and destabilize the watershed. What will be done to prevent this massive loss of biological potential?

Some of the drainages, particularly within the high severity portion of the fire, have experienced cutting. To date, we have seeded approximately 11,750 acres of the most vulnerable areas with various seed mixtures, with the intent of establishing a ground cover to slow soil and water movement. We will continue to monitor the fire area for the need of additional action.

2. Why was the fire characterized to the public as beneficial? The majority of the acreage was severely burned, thus indicating sterilized soils and long-term destabilization of the watershed.

Some earlier statements by Forest Service employees were spoken in error, or were taken out of context. While much of the fire use area and some of the wildfire portion of the fire had beneficial effects, we do not want to give the impression that all of the Warm Fire was beneficial. Much of the wildfire portion burned at too high of an intensity, and it was not beneficial.

3. Will the sterilized area be allowed to be colonized by cheatgrass, or be reseeded with native and non-invasive seeds?

To date, we have seeded with sterile annual rye and other sterile mixes. These seed mixes are certified to be noxious weed free. We are exploring some options of using native seed in the future. The invasion of cheatgrass is a threat that we will be monitoring.

4. Burned areas are being re-seeded with fast-growing non-native grasses to reduce erosion. Will the Forest Service attempt to restore the mix of native grasses that should be in the area (according to Range Site Descriptions, Soil write-ups, etc.)? If so, how?

See above. We are exploring some options with native seed. One of the difficulties is finding adequate seed sources.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

Topic: Wildlife

1. What were the effects on the Arizona Tiger Salamander and other wildlife?

Salamander:

Species identified for evaluation of effects of project actions are controlled by several policies. Among these are species protected under the Endangered Species Act, species under a conservation agreement, species occurring within the project area that are identified as Regional Forester's Sensitive Species, Neotropical Migratory Bird Species (using the relevant Partners in Flight species of concern list), Management Indicator Species identified through the Forest Plan, and special areas or designations such as the Grand Canyon Game Preserve and the Kaibab Squirrel National Natural Landmark. The Arizona tiger salamander is not on any of these specific lists, but aquatic communities in Arizona are of particular concern. As the Warm Fire recovery process continues, species or habitat that may have sensitivity concerns will be addressed as required or specifically needed. Because so many species occur in recovery areas, documentation cannot efficiently evaluate all species. Therefore, certain species are identified to be indicators of effects on a wider group of species. This reduces the amount of time and money spent on the evaluation of effects, but ensures that key habitats and species are accounted for by their representative. For amphibians, the assessment of aquatic macroinvertebrates may suffice to display the effects of future activities on amphibians that would occupy similar habitat.

Other Wildlife:

Many species of wildlife were affected directly or indirectly by the fire. Some that were affected directly include the Kaibab squirrel, nesting northern goshawks and small mammals. Indirectly affected animals include Neotropical migratory birds that could leave the area, larger mammals like deer that could detect and escape areas prior to fire impact, and species that were not in the burn area but live near the area and use it for food like the California condor. Directly affected species often perished because of limited mobility. Indirectly affected species often survived because they were able to leave areas ahead of the flame front. Actual mortality counts are usually ineffective because many animals move underground and succumb to smoke or heat, or burn to an unidentifiable state.

2. Does the decision to let the fire burn in potential wildlife habitat mean that the Endangered Species Act is a fiction that can be disregarded in the decision to burn? Common sense dictated that this was a mistake.

The decision to burn wildlife habitat was based on the area the fire was projected to move into during the managed portion of the fire. During that time, fire effects and behavior actually improved the habitat for many of those species (e.g. northern goshawk and their prey) without affecting habitat necessary for any species protected under the Endangered Species Act. Regardless, the US Fish and Wildlife Service was notified and engaged in where the managed fire would be allowed to burn to protect species and habitat outside the burning area. The ESA is neither fiction, nor is it ever disregarded in burning decisions. In fact, the US Fish and Wildlife Service noted the positive actions of fire during discussions of where to place control lines, and boundaries for the fire under the managed portion of the burn. Many

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

species protected by the ESA actually need some burning to keep from losing their habitat. However, no ESA species were adversely affected by the decision to let the fire burn.

3. Most water sources within the burn area were rendered unusable to wildlife. What is being done to fix this problem?

Water resources are being evaluated, and the FS has noted the damage to important water resources. However, sediment and ash will continue to move downstream for many months. We want to take action, but we want the timing to be right so treatments are effective and do not have to be repeated. Some of the actions being considered include cleaning out man-made ponds with heavy equipment, followed by treating with Bentonite clay to both seal the pond and alter the pH of the water it contains. For natural ponds, we are considering applications of lime to alter the pH and settle water cloudiness. It would be inappropriate to place heavy equipment in these important waters.

4. How many guzzlers and other water sources were damaged in the fire area? What is being done to repair them?

Three guzzlers were damaged by the fire directly, and other sources may have changes to water clarity and pH. Structural water sources, like guzzlers, will be repaired as funding allows. Repairs to non-structural waters, like ponds, are discussed under item 3 above.

5. How many goshawks were:
 Killed? Adults & Juveniles
 Displaced? (displaced to less favorable/occupied habitats)

The Warm Fire encompassed 18 known goshawk territory centers. Of the 18 territories within the fire area, 8 were known to have been active (eggs had been laid) at the time the fire occurred; reproductive status had not been determined by the time of the fire for the other 10 territories. Of the 8 known active nests, 4 were in areas characterized by high severity crown fire, and at least 7 nestling/fledgling goshawks were likely killed by the fire. Adult goshawks were unlikely killed by the fire, but goshawks in areas of high fire severity would have been displaced by the fire, and it will take a long time for goshawk nesting habitat to develop in these areas.

6. Has the destruction to escape and thermal cover for wildlife been calculated? What will be the long-term effect of the fire on wildlife?

Acres incurring high and mixed-high tree mortality (BARC map) have little remaining thermal and escape cover in terms of vegetation. Down wood and snags in these areas are abundant for hiding cover. As winter approaches, most wildlife move to other areas to avoid the snow, or were displaced by the fire to areas with adequate winter denning sites. The long-term effect on wildlife will be varied depending on each species resource usage and habitat

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

requirements. A suite of species will be addressed in planning documents, like the post-fire recovery plan, to more specifically identify effects and needs for the future.

Although herbaceous forage, as well as some ungulate browse species such as aspen and Gambel oak, has already begun to recover in many parts of the burn area and will likely continue to recover rapidly, it will take longer for hiding and thermal cover to recover in high fire severity areas. The Forest Service is working closely with Arizona Game and Fish Department in addressing potential impacts of the fire on wildlife habitat and potential projects to speed recovery of habitat for mule deer and other wildlife species.

7. What is the short/long term effect of the fire on Mexican spotted owl (MSO) habitat? Why did the USFS let that fire burn so long, and what happened to the wildlife?

Mexican spotted owl habitat was largely consumed within the wildfire portion of the burn. No owl habitat occurs within the managed, and more lightly burned, portion of the fire. This is a result of allowing those stands to grow so dense and accumulate so much fuel that the fire was largely unstoppable within these areas. Approximately 11,000 acres of owl habitat were modeled as potentially occurring within the wildfire area. Biologists with the US FWS and USFS are reviewing stand data to determine the actual owl acreage affected by the fire.

However, no Mexican spotted owls have ever been documented as breeding on the Kaibab Plateau. Therefore, disruptions to owls should be minimal during foraging and dispersing periods. Individuals may experience a shift into other unburned or less-severely burned areas for those activities.

The district made a decision, in concert with the US FWS, to allow the fire to burn for as long as favorable effects to natural resources were achieved. When the fire jumped control lines and began to burn in owl habitat, suppression actions were immediately taken to try to halt the spread of the fire. Fueled by unnaturally high levels of fuel in those owl stands, the fire was difficult to control. Please see answers to previous questions in the Wildlife Topic.

8. Regarding the Pediocactus Conservation Agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service (now that half the population is negatively affected), will this agreement be revised to increase priority and/or protection of this species?

Approximately 5,735 acres within the Paradine Plains Cactus Conservation Area were affected by the Warm Fire in both managed and suppression stages. About 5,300 acres display high vegetation mortality. This is only a small percentage (8%) of the 70,000-acre area managed under the conservation agreement, and only a portion (not half) of the occupied area was affected. Surveys will be underway in the spring to determine the extent of loss.

The conservation agreement and management strategy was due to be revised in 2006-2007 as specified when the agreement was made. The revision will focus on new science and surveys for this species, adaptive management based on new information, and a new agreement between agencies regarding the revised management strategy.

Warm Fire
Public Questions & Responses
Generated from Kanab Public Meeting on Oct. 11, 2006

Changes to the management strategy will incorporate lessons learned in the Warm Fire relative to this species, but will not result in a change to the current listing position of the cactus. It will remain a sensitive species and all actions taken within the conservation agreement area will be coordinated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, as required under the conservation agreement.