

National Fire Plan

Mule Days Fire Prevention Efforts

Bishop, California

2004

Inyo National Forest Fire Prevention Personnel from the White Mountain Ranger District stepped up their fire prevention efforts during this year's Mule Days Celebration held in Bishop, CA. "Mule Days" is considered to be the largest, most recognized gathering of mule teams, enthusiasts and spectators in the Nation. It hosts nearly 700 mules and over 30,000 visitors each year. The event features mule contests and races along with a parade that has been lauded as the longest running non-motorized parade in the country.

Each year, around Memorial Day, people from all over the nation and region visit the Owens Valley to participate in this event and, as a result, surrounding public lands see a significant increase in recreational day and overnight use. In their effort to reach area visitors, local prevention personnel worked with the region to provide a backdrop for their public awareness efforts through the widespread use of radio public service announcements (PSAs) and highway billboards. Since escaped campfires had historically accounted for nearly 25% of the area's human caused fires, the announcements and billboards specifically addressed the proper ways to prepare and extinguish campfires when on public lands. As a result, most of those traveling into the area were greeted with the information they would need to make their visit safer and more enjoyable.

Prevention staff then partnered with the Mule Days Executive Board, who agreed to donate ad space in their Mule Days Program for a Smokey Bear PSA and agreed to use the radio PSA as an arena announcement during their many events. In addition, the Board also approved the use of two Smokey Bear hand stamps to validate spectators as they entered or exited the events.

Near the close of the Mule Days Celebration, Smokey Bear rode with his friends on a beautiful red wagon in the famous Mule Days Parade. Parade route announcers then served to remind the public to be extra careful with fire throughout the season, further driving home the prevention message to both visitors and residents alike. All in all, nearly 40,000 residents, travelers and visitors were reached through this coordinated information / education campaign, which helped to significantly decrease abandoned / escaped campfire occurrence on the district throughout the year.

