

Events, June 26, 2012

The events that lead up to the Seeley
Fire of 2012



WARNING

- The next six slides may seem technical, but set the scene for the environmental conditions surrounding the Seeley Fire.
- The remainder of the slides were derived from the Moab Dispatch Center logs and a discussion with PacifiCorp officials.

Some Important Terms

What Is the ERC?

The Energy Release Component (ERC) is a measurement used to help rate fire danger. The ERC is based on an estimate of the potential available energy released per unit area (BTUs per square foot) in the flaming zone of a fire. Day to day changes in ERC are caused by changes in the moisture content of various fuel classes.

What is the BI?

The Burning Index (BI) is another measurement that helps rate fire danger. The BI measures fire intensity and relates the contribution of potential fire behavior to the amount of effort needed to contain the fire.

The Situation

June 25

- ERC = 105 (record breaking high)
- BI = 90
- Lightning begins late afternoon and evening

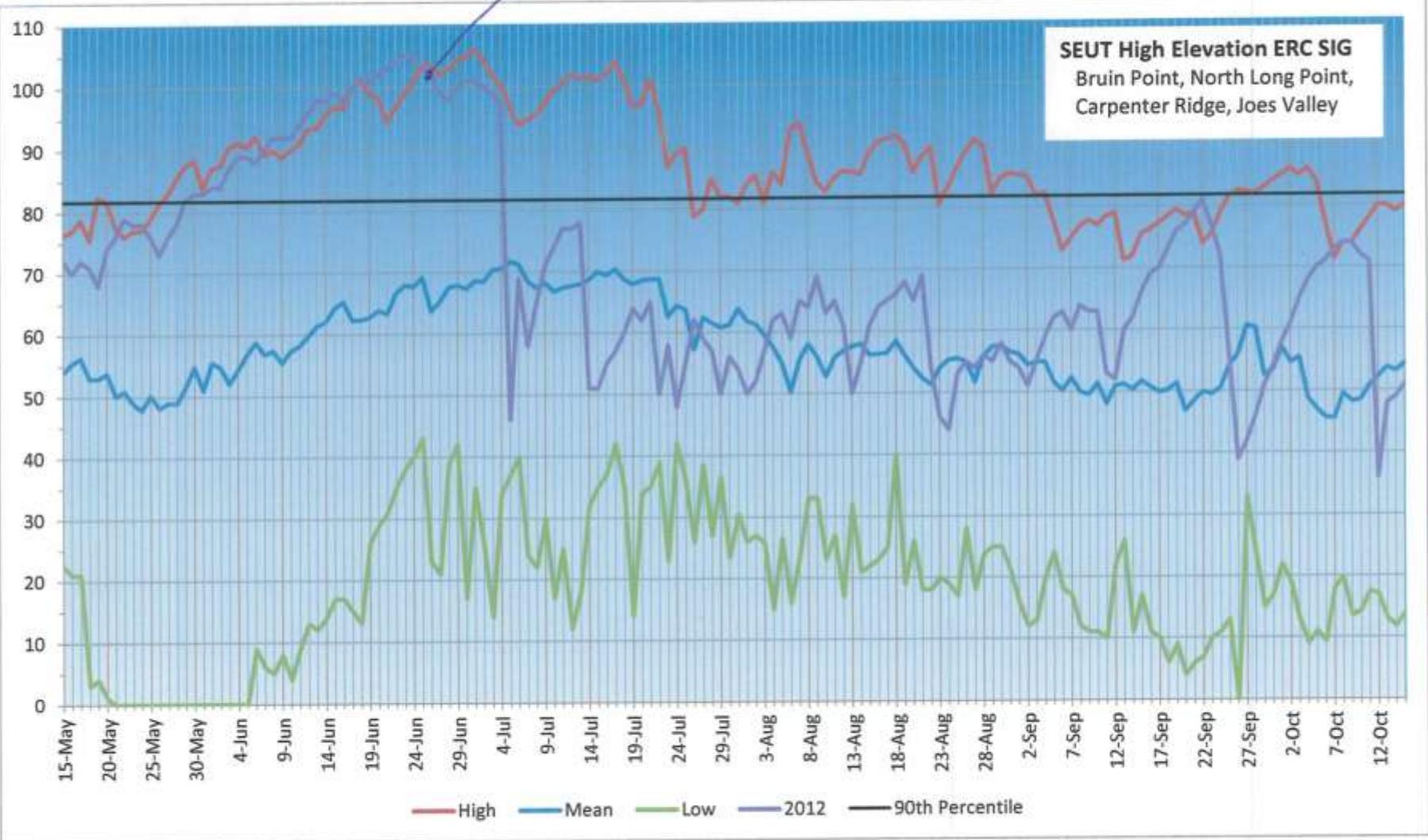
June 26

- ERC = 102
- BI = 89
- 2-5 acre fire reported 5:50 a.m. (The first report to any dispatch center about the fire that would become the Seeley Fire)

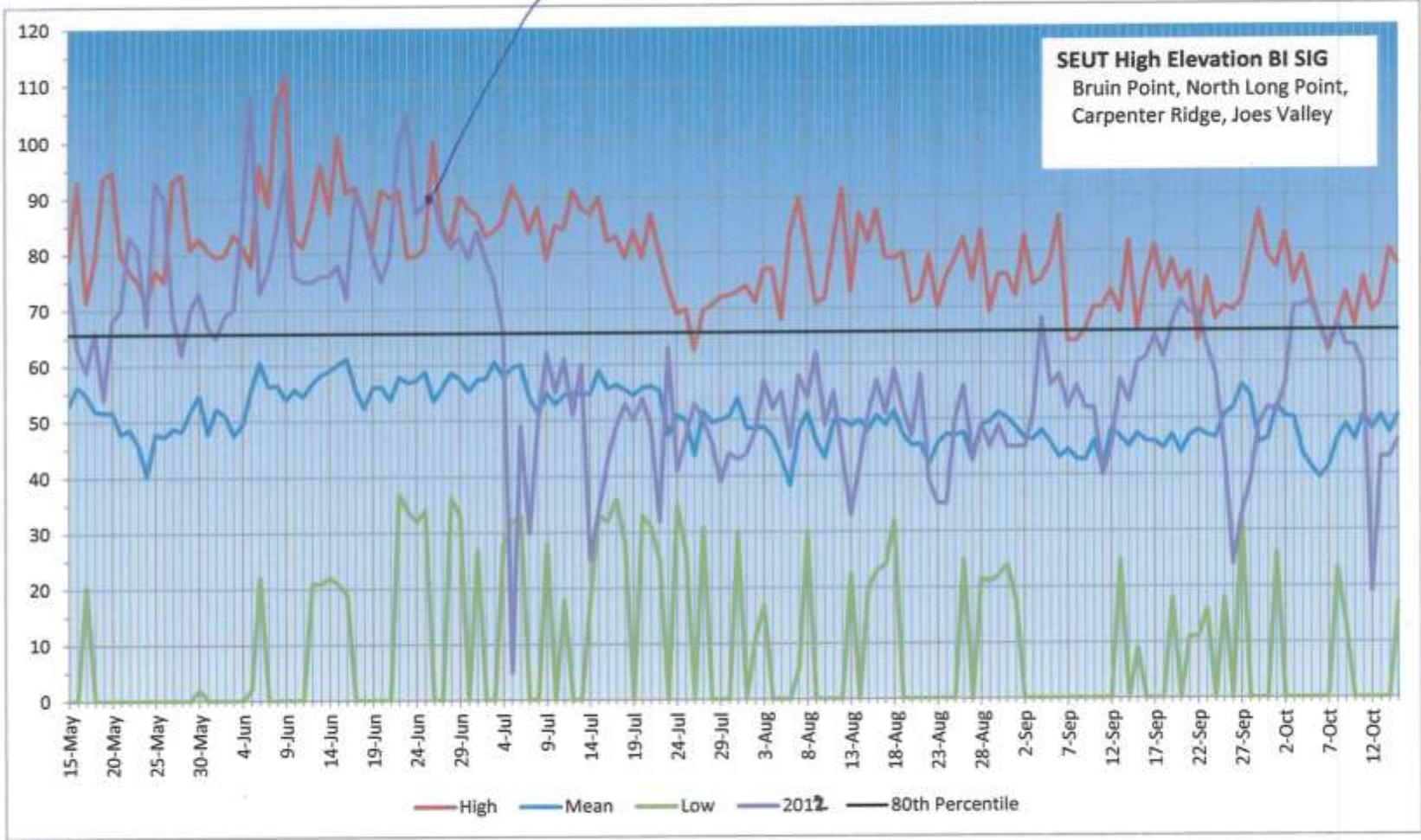
The next two slides show the ERCs and BIs from May 15, 2012 to Oct 12, 2012. The purple line shows the actual conditions compared the recorded high and low conditions for the same period of time.

26th June

SEUT High Elevation ERC SIG
Bruin Point, North Long Point,
Carpenter Ridge, Joes Valley



26th June



The West Was Burning!

Myrtle Fire Type 1 }
Waldo Fire Type 1 } Colorado Fires were using 50% of
the nation's fire fighting resources.

Wood Hollow Fire Type 2 }
Clay Springs Fire Type 1 }
Dump Fire Type 2 } Utah fires burning during the
Church Camp Fire Type 2 } Seeley Fire
Box Creek RX Type 2 }

What is a Fire “Type”?

Types refer to the resources needed to fight a fire.

Type 1 Large Incident: Very organized. This is the largest fire suppression team. It consists of 30-80 team members and is built for long duration fires of 2-4 weeks. Includes 100-2000 + additional people with large numbers of equipment and includes a buying team.

Type 2 Large Incident: Well organized, with 30-50 team members, built for 1-2 week fires. Includes 100-1000 additional personnel with multiple pieces of equipment and can obtain additional support from type 1 fires in area.

Type 3 Moderate Incident: Organized. Consists of 10-20 team members, numerous resources and shifts of 30-200 additional personnel. Built for 1-week assignments or transitions between type 4 and type 2 fires

Type 4 Small Incident: (larger than 1-2 trees) Uses multiple resources and multiple shifts of 5-50 people. Due to complexity Type 4 fires can become a type 3 or type 2 within 2 days or a type 5 to finish the fire until it is out.

Type 5 Small Incident: (1-2 trees) Usually requires only 1 shift of 2-5 people and 1 piece of equipment.

MIFC Dispatch Log



Kevin Poulsen reports fire in Huntington Canyon, near “fork with Miller’s Flat”



Dispatch contacts Rudy Sandoval and Brandon Hoffman, and then Emery County Sheriff’s Office



Rudy Sandoval at Huntington Canyon



Brandon Hoffman on location

From Fantasy To Facts

1. Fantasy: The Fire was reported on June 25.
Fact: The fire was not reported until 5:50 a.m. June 26.
2. Fantasy: The Forest Service did not respond to the report.
Fact: The Forest Service began mobilization and suppression activities immediately upon report



Sandoval can see fire, close to Seeley Mountain, it's a couple of acres, inaccessible, area has received some rain, has some potential to grow. Could use a helicopter.



Sanpete County Fire Warden called and offered to see if Wood Hollow could spare a helicopter.



Hoffman also asks for helicopter ASAP



Hoffman asks for air resources and a load of jumpers. Our helicopter, 6GM, had left Wood Hollow Fire and was assigned to Seeley.



Rogers , on scene, sizes up fire. He reports: Definitely going to need a helicopter on this and a hand crew. 3-5 acres in heavy timber, steep and rugged. Inaccessible. Type 2 IA or Type 1 hotshot crew. Type 4 fire, spread is high, creeping, in the upper 1/3 of timber.



Helicopter (6GM) taking off in 20 minutes



Rogers assumes Incident Command Type 4. Orders two Type 1 hand crews, two Type 2 IAs, and a Type II helicopter for bucket work if possible.



Dispatch checked on availability of crews – there are none. All have been reassigned. All helicopters are committed at this time. Will call if one becomes available.



Asks dispatch to check with Richfield to see if they can get a sky crane for 4-5 drops before fire gets out of hand.



6GM reports fire is at 10-15 acres, backing down slope, has potential to run when it gets warmer.



1 CH (Type 1 helicopter) to helibase after the jump.
Requesting second Type 1 helicopter if possible.
After jump operations IC will get both helicopters on the fire to dump water.



1 CH is on scene tying in with Worthington (Aviation).



J49 (jump plane) advised they were on the scene and in contact with J97 (jump plane). J97 will be doing jump operations.



J49, which had been diverted to site of a new smoke report, was unable to locate the smoke and was returning to Seeley Fire and going into jump ops.



J97 put 8 jumpers on the ground. J49 put 4 jumpers on the ground. (J97 returned to Boise at 11:30. J49 returned to Grand Junction.)



Two Type 2 helicopters ordered out of Richfield for the day only. Air Attack ordered out of Grand Junction.

From Fantasy To Facts

Fantasy: If the Forest Service had just used PacifiCorp's helicopter, they could have put out the fire.

Fact: PacifiCorp/Energy West Mining personnel reported the fire at 7 a.m. to Moab Fire Dispatch after doing a reconnaissance flight associated with their helicopter-supported coal exploration. Moab Dispatch notified PacifiCorp that they were aware of the fire. The pilot and the helicopter contracted to PacifiCorp were not "carded" and could not legally work on the fire. FS crews were on the fire at the time of the notification. The Forest Service had a helicopter on the fire early, all aerial suppression efforts failed due to 30+ mile-an-hour winds and extreme fire behavior.



All jumpers are on the ground.



Fire has doubled in size, becoming more active.



Requesting a Type 3 Incident Command team



Incident Commander Rogers wants dispatch to order two more Type 2 crews for a total of 4 hand crews. The fire is making some big pushes up the ridgeline.



Dispatch advises two heavy air tankers unavailable, so cancelled after talking with District Ranger and Brandon Hoffman.



Fire is at about 50 acres and growing. Wind shifted slightly from the west.



Have both Type 2s hold in Richfield Fire Center.



Aircraft not effective. All pulled from fire except 6GM and put on hold. Will monitor fire and redirect ground resources.



Fire has grown to 75 acres. Type 2 helicopters are not being effective and can be released if needed elsewhere.



We have 12 jumpers on the ridge; Engine 1031 crew; Worthington and 6 crew members with 6GM, 14B14; 3A800, Incident Commander, Jensen and Hoffman.



Fire is crossing SR-31. Emery County Sheriff's Office sending deputies to shut down SR-31.



Ordered three engines out of Moab--6619, 6314, and 5342 will be en route. Our hand crew will be in Moab in about 2 hours and will come to Ferron.



Mandatory evacuations begin. Some structures threatened, some cabins and historic guard station.



Fire is at 600 acres with gusting and erratic winds.



Placed order for a Type 2 team. (at 7:36 placed order for two strike teams of engines.)



Ordered two air attacks. 9CP coming out of Durango. Borrowed 9GW from Richfield until 9CP in place. Placed an order up to the Great Basin Coordination Center for an air attack to be devoted to the fire. 9GW was off of fire at 2000. 9CP took over.



Pulling all resources off Seeley fire except Engine 6619, which will be staged at the Guard Station and will be pulling off about midnight. Engine 1031 at Miller Flat.

June 27



Fire is at 18,000 acres. Evacuations are in effect and ongoing. Highway 31 is still closed. Type 3 Team arrives at Ferron.

Summary

- Fire first reported to dispatch at 5:50 am on June 26th.
- Fire personnel on scene at 6:20 a.m., June 26--only 30 minutes after first reported to dispatch.
- 7:50 am helicopters ordered, but unavailable.
- Fires in Colorado had half the nations resources.
- 5 other large fires in Utah at the time, needing resources.
 - Priority is for fires threatening life and structures.
- 10:05 am helicopter arrives on scene, but ineffective at stopping the fire from spreading.
- 2 helicopters do bucket drops on fire, but fire is still growing.
- Record high ERC's and extreme conditions, including high winds, fire continues to spread.
- 8:05 am of June 27 fire is estimated to be 18,000 acres.