



2004



(Peppin Fire)

Overview

The San Juan Hotshots formed in 2002 as one of 93 IHC crews in the nation. We moved the station to Hesperus, Colorado on the Ft Lewis Experimental Station. This was the third year for the SJIHC. The crew started on the 19th of April and finished on the 2nd of October. This will give an overview of the 2004 season covering topics such as hiring, assignments, training, and safety.



Hiring

The crew did not experience many changes with positions in 2004. The crew's Superintendent, Shawna Legarza and Assistant Superintendent Jim Cornelius remained as well as our squad bosses Courtney Madigan, Dave Pearce, and Joe Wyatt. We hired five new seasonal employees Dave Kempton, Lee Shepard, Pat Romportl, Rian Ream, and Meridath Rose. We also hired two new Senior Firefighters Jay Godson and Pat Moore.



(SiSi Ridge Fire)



Assignments

This year we spent 108 days committed on fire, prescribed fire, or project work in addition to this we also completed 14 days of mandatory training. In late May we were off to the New Mexico wildfires on the Cibola and Lincoln National Forests. On the Peppin Fire, the SJIHC and two other Hotshot crews helped cut a total of 24 miles of indirect line. We renamed the assignment to the “Preppin” fire. There would be little time off from here on out, as the fire season was now in full swing.

The West Slope of Colorado kept us busy through most of June and July. The crew became proficient in pinion juniper strategies and tactics, and wondered if they would ever see timber fires again. In between running around the Grand Junction area, the crew helped out the Public Lands with providing initial attack modules for summer lightning storms, as well as helping with some prescribed fire. In late July the crew received an order to Washington State. The highlight of the assignment was coming down from spike camp to eat at Stehekin, a village accessible only by air or boat situated at the mouth of Lake Chelan only to return the next day due to the fire blowing up and trying to burn over our helispot.

After some much needed rest, it was off again, this time to Alaska. Once more the crew flew, this time commercial, landing in Fairbanks after 12 hours of connections. Alaska burnt over 6 million acres that season and most of the state was very smoky. We were assigned to a complex of fires within 50 miles of the Yukon Territory. The abundance of wildlife, daily boat rides, and beautiful scenery made up for the difficult assignment. After 14 days the crew had 2 days off in Fairbanks. The last week of work there was marked with cold and often wet weather, coming home to the southwest was a welcome relief for most. The crew was committed for 108 days with 22 fire assignments in the states of New Mexico, Colorado, Washington, and Alaska. Highlights for the season were the addition of the crew buggies, five new hires, and no serious time loss injuries.





2004 Assignment Summary

FIRE NAME	STATE	OPERATIONAL SHIFTS	Class
Lookout	NM	4	G
Peppin	NM	14	G
Puma	CO	5	C
Greasewood	CO	4	G
Bull Hill	CO	3	C
Fire Box	CO	5	B
McGruder	CO	6	F
Spring Creek	CO	2	B
Saddle Mt.	CO	5	E
Wildhorse	CO	1	B
Millwood	CO	1	B
W	CO	2	B
Sisi Ridge	WA	11	E
Pot Peak	WA	3	G
Taylor Complex	AK	21	G



(Godson)



Training

Training on an IHC is important to ensure that the crew has a depth of experience for future seasons and has the ability to move personnel into new positions. The first part of the season was dedicated to training. A combination of physical, classroom, and field exercises were utilized. During the first two weeks of the year, we completed double PT sessions consisting of runs up to 6-10 miles, 2-300 push-ups, 500-1000 sit-ups and 20-30 pull-ups. The crew completed PT sessions between 1 ½ to 2 hours in length consisting of runs and calisthenics. The crew completed the mandatory training required for IHCs plus more. The following is a list of courses we completed: I-200, S-131, S-212, S-230, S-234, sand table exercises, and human factors.

In addition to the standard classroom training we conducted several field exercises. The main focus of the field exercises was to simulate standard activities faced by a hotshot crew. Line construction, falling techniques, working with fixed and rotor wing aircraft, night operations, mop up, safety zone identification, independent squad deployments, fire shelter deployment, and line location were all covered in the field Exercises. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the field exercises was the increase in crew cohesion.



(Romportl and Wyatt)



Safety

Daily morning briefings are given, followed by the six minute to safety session, with a weekly safety session occurring throughout the season. Tailgate safety sessions are administered along with JHA's completed for specific job tasks. The crew has the proper documentation for safety rules and regulations posted at the Hesperus Base. Past fatalities and case studies have been reviewed and will be in the yearly training program.

The San Juan Interagency Hotshot crew is committed to the highest level of safety standards and policies. All agency policies regarding safety will be adhered to at all times. Safety of our crew is the number one priority



(Safety Meeting, tanks were empty)

Fuels Treatment Acres

The crew helped with one prescribed burn in Alamosa on the wildlife refuge. We also assisted with fuel reduction projects for the radio repeaters on the forest and an aspen thinning project around Vallecito Lake.



2004 Crew Roster

Legarza, Shawna	Superintendent
Cornelius, Jim	Assistant Superintendent
Pearce, Dave	Squad Boss
Wyatt, Joe	Squad Boss
Madigan, Courtney	Squad Boss
Moore, Pat	Lead Crew
Godson, Jay	Lead Crew
Jones, Ryder	Lead Crew
Hostetler, Kristen	Crew Member
Ream, Rian	Crew Member
Thiel, Travis	Crew Member
Gething, Ray	Crew Member
Martin, Lance	Crew Member
Birdsell, Jacob	Crew Member
Wheeler, Dustin	Crew Member
Shepard, Lee	Crew Member
Finan, Brian	Crew Member
Yazzie, Clay	Crew Member
Romportl, Pat	Crew Member
Kempton, Dave	Crew Member

2004 Detailers

Hollenbeck, Kareem	14 Days
Carlton, Tom	28 Days
Ringer, Matt	21 Days
Stevens, Amy	21 Days
Brooks, EJ	14 Days



Lee Shepard was only a San Juan Hotshot for one season, but in that short amount of time he touched all of our lives in a positive way. Lee grew up in Kansas graduating from Hill City High School. After his graduation he moved on to Hutchinson Community Collage where he pursued a degree in Fire Science. Lee had the opportunity to work for the San Juan Hotshots after his first year in school and was extremely exited about the coming fire season.

Immediately upon arrival Lee demonstrated an extreme work ethic combined with a desire to learn. Lee stayed with the crew thru the Sisi Ridge fire in Washington, before returning to Kansas to finish his degree. During the winter of 2004 we lost Lee to a tragic motorcycle accident.

He was very excited about returning the following season for the full fire season with the Hotshots. Lee will be missed by his family as well as his extended family in the fire community. He will be remembered by the San Juan Hotshots through our Hotshot of the Year award that is given to one individual each fire season. The award is voted on by the entire crew and the award winner must exhibit Lee's strongest qualities, hard work, never ending determination, quiet leadership, and relentless optimism. Everyone that had the opportunity to meet Lee became a better person because of him.



(Lee Shepard)