

OCT. 13, 1994

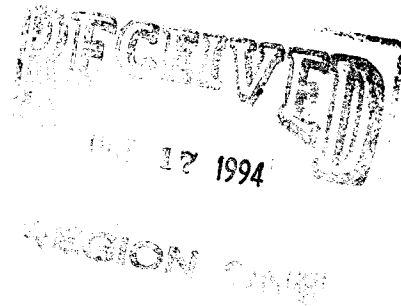
TO: JOHN SHEPHERD, C.O.  
TOMMY THOMPSON, R-3  
JIM SAIN, R-1

FROM: RODNEY BELL, D-4 *Red*

SUBJECT: FISH DAY FIRE CRITIQUE

ATTACHED IS THE MINUTES FROM THE CRITIQUE OF THE FISH DAY FIRE HELD  
AT KINSTON ON OCT. 3, 1994.

THANKS,



# **FISH DAY FIRE CRITIQUE**

## **KINSTON NC**

### **03 OCT. 94**

#### **REVIEW BOARD**

JOHN SHEPHERD, SECTION CHIEF PROTECTION, CHAIRMAN  
JIM SAIN, REGIONAL FORESTER, R-1  
TOMMY THOMPSON, REGIONAL FORESTER, R-3

#### **OBJECTIVES OF CRITIQUE**

1. DETERMINE HOW N.C.F.S. AND U.S.F.S. FUNCTION TOGETHER WITHIN EXISTING AGREEMENTS.
2. DETERMINE IF EXISTING OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES ARE ADEQUATE OR NEED MODIFICATION.
3. ESTABLISH GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE TRANSITION BETWEEN DISTRICT INITIAL ATTACK ORGANIZATION AND MAJOR FIRE ORGANIZATION.
4. DETERMINE HOW WE CAN BETTER SUPPORT AN INCIDENT LIKE THIS SHOULD IT HAPPEN AGAIN.
5. LOOK AT HOW UNIFIED COMMAND WORKED ON THIS INCIDENT.

RODNEY BELL, DISTRICT RANGER D-4, GAVE A CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF THE FIRE FROM INITIAL ATTACK ON SATURDAY THROUGH ARRIVAL OF THE U.S.F.S. OVERHEAD TEAM ON TUESDAY NIGHT.

#### **POINTS OF DISCUSSION**

1. WHO MADE INITIAL ATTACK ON THE FIRE ON SATURDAY, MAY 21, 1994?

INITIAL ATTACK WAS HANDLED JOINTLY WITH BOTH AGENCIES PROVIDING OVERHEAD AND EQUIPMENT. DISTRICT RANGER HILLMAN AND DISTRICT FORESTER CULLOM WERE PRESENT ON SATURDAY. BRAD JENKINS WAS I.C. RODNEY BELL WAS OPERATIONS.

2. DID N.C.F.S. TAKE FURTHER ACTIONS ON THE FIRE BEFORE IT BROKE OUT ON MONDAY?

THE N.C.F.S. DID NOT HAVE ANY EQUIPMENT ON THE FIRE ON SUNDAY, HOWEVER, WE DID ARRANGE FOR A RECON FLIGHT WITH BRAD JENKINS ON SUNDAY. IT WAS ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT ADDITIONAL LINES AND POSSIBLY A BLADED LINE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ON THE LEFT FLANK. D-4 ALSO OFFERED TO ARRANGE A FLIGHT FOR DISTRICT RANGER HILLMAN.

3. DO WE TURN MOP UP OVER TO U.S.F.S. WHEN IT IS ON THEIR PROPERTY?

YES. U.S.F.S. HANDLES MOP UP ON FEDERAL PROPERTY. WE DO ASSIST WITH RESOURCES IF REQUESTED BY U.S.F.S.

4. WHAT EQUIPMENT DID U.S.F.S. HAVE ON FIRE ON SUNDAY?

U.S.F.S. HAD 2 TRACTORS AND NUMEROUS ENGINES WITH CREWS ON SUNDAY.

5. WITH THE CURRENT AGREEMENT, CAN WE MANDATE ACTION ON FEDERAL LAND IF WE FEEL IT IS NEEDED?

WE CAN ONLY RECOMMEND THAT ADDITIONAL ACTIONS BE TAKEN, WITH THE CURRENT AGREEMENT.

6. WERE THE NUMBER OF LINES BEING PLACED IN THE POCOSIN A CONCERN TO THE U.S.F.S. ?

YES. THE U.S.F.S. HAD PLANS TO CONTROL BURN SOME OF THE IMPACTED AREAS, AND ADDITIONAL LINES WOULD HAMPER THIS.

7. DID OBTAINING PERMISSION TO ENTER WILDERNESS AREAS DELAY SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES?

NO. THE U.S.F.S. CALLED ASHVILLE OR ATLANTA AND ADVISED THEM THAT WE WOULD BE WORKING INSIDE THE POND PINE WILDERNESS. PERMISSION WAS RECEIVED BY THE TIME WE HAD EQUIPMENT IN PLACE.

8. AT WHAT POINT DID THE ORGANIZATION GO TO UNIFIED COMMAND?

THE ORGANIZATION BECAME UNIFIED ON MONDAY WHEN THE FIRE ESCAPED AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT WE WERE GOING BEYOND INITIAL ATTACK. I.C. JENKINS AND BELL; OPS DUNN AND CHERRY

9. WHEN WAS THE OVERHEAD TEAM ORDERED?

ORDERING AN OVERHEAD TEAM WAS DISCUSSED LATE MONDAY AFTERNOON AND MONDAY NIGHT AT 2400 HRS. AT THAT TIME THE FIRE WAS CONTAINED AND THE DECISION WAS MADE TO RE-EVALUATE IN THE MORNING. AT 1230 TUESDAY, THE U.S.F.S. OVERHEAD TEAM WAS ORDERED.

10. DID THE DISTRICT FIRE TEAM GET DISPATCHED TO THIS FIRE?

NO. DUE TO THE ANGOLA FIRE AND THE SUPPORT EFFORTS FOR THE FISH DAY FIRE, ALL DISTRICT TEAM MEMBERS WERE ALREADY ASSIGNED. NOTE: THE DISTRICT TEAM WOULD HAVE BEEN REQUESTED MONDAY AFTERNOON IF IT WERE AVAILABLE.

DAN SMITH, OPERATIONS CHIEF, GAVE A CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF THE FIRE FROM TUESDAY NIGHT UNTIL FRIDAY.

## POINTS OF DISCUSSION

### 1. LITTLE ROAD ASSIGNMENT

ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, AFTER IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THE FIRE WAS RUNNING, THE D-4 STRIKE TEAM WAS REASSIGNED TO THE END OF LITTLE RD. THE HEAD WAS STILL A GOOD WAYS OFF AT THIS TIME. THEIR ASSIGNMENT WAS TO PLOW 2 LINES FROM THE EAST END OF LITTLE RD TO THE OATS RD, THEN LITTLE RD WOULD BE BACKFIRED IN AN ATTEMPT TO STOP THE HEAD. THEY WENT APPROX. .25MI INTO THE WOODS AND BECAME STUCK. THE D-8 STRIKE TEAM WAS SENT TO PULL THEM OUT. THE FIRE HAD PROGRESSED CLOSE ENOUGH TO LITTLE RD THAT THE TRACTORS COULD NOT RETURN OUT TO CATFISH LAKE RD WHEN THEY GOT UNSTUCK. THE TRACTORS FOUND AN AREA AT END OF LITTLE RD THAT HAD BEEN BURNED PREVIOUSLY AND BEGAN TO POTATO PATCH. THE AIRTANKERS ALSO DROPPED RETARDENT AROUND THEM TO BOX THEM OFF FROM THE FIRE. TOM HARRIS COMMUNICATED THAT HE FELT SAFE WHERE HE WAS AT. THE FLANK OF THE FIRE CAME WITHIN APPROX. .25 MI. OF WHERE THE TRACTORS WERE LOCATED. AFTER IT PASSED, ALL TRACTORS RETURNED TO CATFISH LAKE RD.

MAJOR CONCERNS WERE THAT THE TRACTORS DID NOT HAVE A SAFE AREA WHEN THEY LEFT THE RD., AND THAT THERE WAS A LACK OF CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN OPERATIONS PERSONNEL AS TO THE EXACT ASSIGNMENT OF THIS EQUIPMENT.

### 2. AT WHAT POINT WAS THE LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR CONTACTED?

HENRY SERMONS, CRAVEN COUNTY E.M.C., WAS CONTACTED EARLY ON WEDNESDAY MORNING. AT THAT TIME THE FIRE WAS NOT HEADED DIRECTLY TOWARD STRUCTURES, AND IT WAS WELL WITHIN THE NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARIES. AFTER WE LEARNED THAT THE FIRE WAS BURNING TOWARDS HOUSES ALONG CATFISH LAKE RD, WE AGAIN CONTACTED HIM AND HE CAME TO THE FIRE. A LOCAL N.C.F.S. PERSON WAS ASSIGNED TO WORK WITH HIM AND HELP HIM WORK WITH THE TEAM.

### 3. PUBLIC INFORMATION. THE FIRE ONLY HAD ONE P.I.O. ASSIGNED AT FIRST. HE WAS GIVEN A CELLULAR PHONE AND A CAR. THIS WAS NOT ENOUGH TO HANDLE THIS FIRE. LATTER IN THE INCIDENT HE RECEIVED ADDITIONAL HELP.

### 4. THERE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE A CLEAN FLOW OF INFORMATION BETWEEN ICP AND DISTRICT OPS. DISTRICT OPS COULD NOT GET A COPY OF SHIFT PLAN AND HAD DIFFICULTY CONTACTING ANYONE AT ICP.

TOM HARRIS, D-4 STRIKE TEAM LEADER, SHOWED SLIDES TAKEN ON LITTLE RD AND INDIGO DIVISION.

5. COMMUNICATIONS- B.I.F.C. COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM DID NOT WORK WELL ON THIS FIRE. COMMUNICATIONS UNIT COULD NOT FIND A TOWER THAT THEY COULD GET PERMISSION TO HANG A REPEATER ON. ALSO, THE USE OF PORTABLE RADIOS TO TALK TO AIRCRAFT WHILE WORKING AROUND HEAVY EQUIPMENT AND POWERLINES DID NOT WORK.
6. INDIGO INCIDENT--TOM HARRIS STATED THAT HIS BURNOUT FIRE WOULD BURN VERY INTENSE AS SOON AS IT HIT THE GROUND, BUT IT WAS PULLING INTO THE FIRE. HE SAID THAT ON ONE OCCASION THE BURNOUT FIRE BURNED STRAIGHT UP, IT THEN SEEMED TO HAVE A DOWNWARD BURST OF AIR AND THE FIRE WOULD LAY ACROSS THE LINE. THIS IS WHEN THE TRACTORS WOULD TURN OUT TO GET IN THE BLACK SAFETY ZONE. THE TRACTORS HAD A DIFFICULT TIME GETTING BACK TO THE BLACK LINE DUE TO SMOKE AND THE HEAT OF THE FIRE LAYING ACROSS THE LINE. THEY HAD A SECOND OCCASION WHEN THEY HAD TO PULL BACK TO THE BLACK LINE.

ACCORDING TO THE HELICOPTER COORDINATOR, HE WAS OVER THE TRACTORS ALL DAY AND SAW BOTH OCCASIONS WHEN THEY PULLED OUT. HE STATED TO DAN THAT THE ONLY TIME THE HELICOPTERS WERE PULLED OFF THE INDIGO DIVISION WAS WHEN LARGE TANKERS WERE WORKING IN THE AREA.

THERE WERE 2 PROBLEMS THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED FROM THE INDIGO INCIDENT. HOW TO BETTER MANAGE THE COMMUNICATIONS AND WHAT TO DO IF THE SAME WEATHER CONDITIONS OCCUR AGAIN.

IF THE SAME SITUATION OCCURS AGAIN, A N.C.F.S. AIRPLANE WITH A PILOT EXPERIENCED IN POCOSIN FIREFIGHTING, SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO THE DIVISION. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, A DIVISION SUPERVISOR QUALIFIED PERSON WITH POCOSIN FIRE FIGHTING EXPERIENCE AND A N.C.F.S. RADIO COULD BE PLACED IN HELICOPTER. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, TACTICS MAY NEED TO BE CHANGED.

GARY CURCIO TALKED ABOUT WEATHER CONDITIONS THE DAY OF INDIGO. HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS.

4 RAWS STATIONS SHOWED WINDS AT 180 DEGREES. THIS WOULD HAVE PUT PRESSURE ON INDIGO DIVISION WITH FIRE BURNING STRAIGHT AT THE LINE.

AT 1300, 4 RAWS STATIONS RECORDED 10 HR. FUELS LOWER THAN FINE FUELS.

FAIRFIELD RAWS HAD 1000 HR FUELS AT LESS THAN 20%

RADIO SOUNDS FROM CAPE HATTERAS INDICATED AN ADVERSE WIND PROFILE THE PREVIOUS DAY.

WEATHER CONDITIONS APPEARED TO BE BLOW UP AND THE FIRE REACTED ACCORDINGLY. SLIDES APPEAR TO SHOW SMOKE DOMINATED PLUME WHICH INDICATES BLOW UP CONDITIONS.

INFORMATION WAS AVAILABLE TO FBA AND METEOROLOGIST THAT CONDITIONS WERE EXTREME, BUT THIS WAS NOT COMMUNICATED OUT TO THE FIELD.

BLOW UP WINDOW SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN FROM 1100 HRS TO ABOUT 1900 HRS.

ON MAY 24, NWS-RALEIGH DID PUT OUT NOTIFICATION THAT WE WERE HAVING CRITICAL FIRE EPISODE WITH MIXING HT. AT 11,000'.

RADIO SOUNDS AT CAPE HATTERAS INDICATE WIND PROFILE TYPE 1-B.

THERE WAS A LARGE BURNOUT OPERATION TO THE SOUTH OF INDIGO.

WE NEED TO GET ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TRAINED AS FBA'S AND TRAIN THEM TO BE PROFICIENT IN POCOSIN CONDITIONS. HAD A N.C.F.S. FBA BEEN WORKING WITH THE TEAM, HE MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE EXTREME CONDITIONS AND PASSED IT ON TO OPERATIONS. THIS INFORMATION MIGHT CHANGE THE PLANNED STRATEGY.

THE METEOROLOGIST ASSIGNED TO THE TEAM MAKES NO MENTION OF ANY ADVERSE WINDS IN THE SHIFT PLAN, AND THE FBA MAKES NO MENTION OF ANY SERIOUS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS EXPECTED.

ROB BICKERSTAFFE SAID THE HELICOPTERS HAD BEEN WORKING SPOTS BEHIND THE TRACTORS NEAR LAKE FARM RD. IT WAS NOT COMMUNICATED TO OPERATIONS OR THE STRIKE TEAM THAT THEY HAD ANY SPOTS BEHIND THEM.

DAVID JARMAN, UNIFIED INCIDENT COMMANDER, GAVE A SYNOPSIS OF HOW UNIFIED COMMAND WORKED ON THIS INCIDENT. HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS.

N.C.F.S. AND U.S.F.S. INCIDENT COMMANDERS HAD AN EQUAL ROLL. EVEN THOUGH THE FIRE WAS ON FEDERAL LAND THE STATE RESOURCE COMMITMENT AND THE THREAT TO PRIVATE LAND MADE UNIFIED COMMAND NECESSARY.

DAVID NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NEGATIVE COMMENTS REGARDING THE FIRE AND HOW IT COULD AFFECT RELATIONS WITH COOPERATORS AND U.S.F.S.

THE U.S.F.S. TEAM RECOGNIZED THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF EXPERTISE IN POCOSIN FIRES AND LOOKED TO DAVID AND DAN FOR HELP. A N.C.F.S. OVERHEAD TEAM WOULD HAVE WORKED WELL DUE TO EXPERIENCE WITH POCOSIN CONDITIONS. IF WE CANNOT PROVIDE A TEAM WE NEED TO BEEF UP THEIR ORGANIZATION WITH N.C.F.S. PERSONNEL IN KEY POSITIONS. (LOGISTICS, GROUND SUPPORT, FINANCE, SCOUTS, PLANS)

COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS TO BE REFINED.

DAVID SAID HE WAS NOT SURE HOW ASSERTIVE WE CAN BE WITH MOP UP ON A FEDERAL FIRE.,

THERE WILL LIKELY BE SOME CHANGES IN OUR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT.

AN ATTEMPT TO GET A FIRE METEOROLOGIST TO WORK WITH RALEIGH NWS FIRE WEATHER FORECASTER DID NOT WORK. RALEIGH WEATHER WAS MORE ACCURATE THAN FIRE FORECASTER.

LARGER INFORMATION SECTION WAS NEEDED FROM THE BEGINNING.

URBAN INTERFACE WAS A CONCERN DURING THIS FIRE. ASSIGNING A N.C.F.S. PERSON TO WORK WITH LOCAL E.M.C. HELPED MAKE STRUCTURE PROTECTION WORK BETTER WITHIN THE SYSTEM. OUTFITTING VFD WITH NOMEX WAS A PROBLEM THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED.

DAN KILLINGSWORTH, REGION ONE OPERATIONS OFFICER, ADVISED NO PROBLEMS AT KINSTON OTHER THAN SOME REQUEST NOT FOLLOWING PROPER CHAIN OF COMMAND.

B.C. CRAIN, DEPUTY PLANS CHIEF, SPOKE ON THE PLANNING SECTION.

PLANNING SECTION HAD A LOT OF TRAINEES AND NEEDED MORE PEOPLE THAT WERE FAMILIAR WITH PLANING. HE ADVISED THEIR PLAN WAS SUFFICIENT BUT THE MAP WAS POOR UNTIL THEY BEGAN TO USE THE GPS / GIS . THE PLANNING SECTION SEEMED TO GET TO BOGGED DOWN WITH PAPERWORK, BUT OVERALL THEY DID A GOOD JOB. HE SAID N.C.F.S. NEEDS TO USE GPS / GIS. B.C. ALSO AGREED THAT WE MAY NEED TO BEEF UP A FEDERAL TEAM WITH OUR PEOPLE.

RICKY HILL, DEPUTY LOGISTICS CHIEF, SPOKE ON THE LOGISTICS SECTION.

THE U.S.F.S. LOGISTICS SECTION WAS NOT PREPARED TO HANDLE THE DAILY MAINTENANCE OF ALL THE EQUIPMENT ON THE FIRE. HE SAID IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A HELP TO HAVE THE ENTIRE LOGISTICS SECTION FROM OUR OVERHEAD TEAM. HE WAS STATIONED AT THE FAIRGROUNDS, WORKING OUT OF HIS CAR. HE NEEDED TO BE AT THE ICP AND BE MERGED WITH THE U.S.F.S. LOGISTICS SECTION. HE ALSO SAID HE NEEDED BETTER COMMUNICATIONS.

JIM SAIN, REGIONAL FORESTER, REGION ONE, MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF WE COULD HAVE SENT ONE OF OUR PROJECT TEAMS, BUT THAT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE POSSIBLE. HE SAID HE HOPES WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM THIS AND MAKE THIS EXPERIENCE A POSITIVE ONE.

JOHN SHEPHERD, SECTION CHIEF, MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

HE HOPED WE HAD IDENTIFIED BOTH PROBLEMS THAT WE NEED TO WORK AT AS WELL AS THE GOOD THINGS. THE UNIFIED COMMAND WORKED WELL ON THIS FIRE. HE SAID THERE WILL BE A JOINT U.S.F.S / N.C.F.S. UNIFIED FIRE REVIEW SCHEDULED LATER THIS YEAR.

ADJOURN      1550 HRS.

**RECOMMENDATIONS 10/28/94  
BASED ON NCFS FISH DAY FIRE CRITIQUE ON 10/13/94**

The following recommendations to be considered by the NCFS and USFS for future fire control activities involving Unified/Joint Command in fire control activities.

1. Place more emphasis on securing and using local fire weather data to prepare accurate fire behavior predictions for safe tactical decision-making. Implement local personnel and equipment resources to supplement this need.
2. Ensure that communication links are adequate and operational to ensure strategy and tactics can be initiated effectively and safely. Extra consideration for radio communication between air and ground forces (particularly heavy equipment, where engine noise is significant) should be made to be sure radio traffic can be heard. Employ communication links with all cooperators.
3. All potentially hazardous operations will have aerial or ground lookouts, with communications links, who are experienced in local tactics and hazards.
4. All NCFS pilots and new foresters will attend Regional Strategy and Tactics schools this year and a Statewide Air Attack school next year.
5. Incidents that employ Unified Command will be adequately staffed by respective agencies to meet the needs of the incident.
6. All fireline personnel have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that they and the personnel/equipment assigned to work for them can perform tasks safely. Non-compliance with any of the 10 Standard Firefighting Orders should be corrected immediately, and the 18 Situations That Shout Watch Out should always be considered when taking fire control actions.
7. Pilot duty limitations must be considered by fire operations to ensure that aerial support is available for the required hours needed for fire control activities.