

AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

U.S. FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Fire can be an integral part of an ecosystem and a destructive force causing significant socioeconomic and ecological damage. Proper understanding and resources are necessary to effectively manage fire as a key part of any landscape.

The U.S. Forest Service works with policy makers, land managers, and communities to implement best practices in three main areas of fire: ecosystem restoration, community preparedness, and response. Grounded in sound science, extensive research and application, a comprehensive training program, and a proven inter-agency coordination system, the U.S. Forest Service has the largest fire expertise in the world.

The U.S. Forest Service supports better fire management practices across Africa and the Middle East through the provision technical assistance and capacity building on a wide array of issues.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State support U.S. Forest Service technical cooperation in fire management.

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BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Fire management is a key issue across many countries' ecosystems. Fire – anthropogenic and wild alike – may simultaneously serve as an integral part of a healthy ecosystem and pose considerable threats to ecosystem integrity. Fire can be an effective tool for the restoration of degraded landscapes as well as a destructive force that may cause untold socioeconomic and ecological damage. Proper understanding and resources are necessary to effectively manage fire as a critical component of any landscape.

The U.S. Forest Service has managed fire for more than 100 years. As the world's premiere firefighting agency, the U.S. Forest Service provides critically needed resources and expertise to protect communities and maintain forest and range ecosystem health. The U.S. Forest Service has local and national teams to respond to fire incidents, plan for fire management and application, study its ecological role, and train thousands of specialized fire employees. U.S. Forest Service scientists in research stations and fire labs across the country conduct leading research in many fields of fire science including social and economic dimensions; atmospheric science; hazardous fuels reduction; ecosystem restoration; and fire ecology, behavior, and chemistry.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Forest Service provides short and long-term technical advisors to strengthen capacity of and mentor partner institutions on a range of issues. U.S. Forest Service experts work across all management tiers, from national agencies that direct and implement policy to other key stakeholders like communities, civil society, and the private sector.

ILLUSTRATIVE FIRE PROGRAMS

Morocco

Since 2001, the U.S. Forest Service has worked with the Moroccan High Commission on Water, Forests and Combating Desertification (on fire management and Incident Command Systems activities). Supported by the U.S. Department of State, this partnership seeks to enhance coordination, communication, and response to fire incidents. The U.S. Forest Service facilitated the development of a national fire management manual (published by the High Commission in 2013) while also supporting the High Commission on staffing, qualifications, and standard operating procedures for a new national fire management center that will open in Rabat in June 2015. Lastly, the U.S. Forest



The U.S. Forest Service has provided firefighting training to groups around the world, including this team in Ethiopia. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service.



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Service provides technical assistance to the High Commission to integrate facets of the Incident Command System into the Moroccan fire management system. This work includes developing standard operating procedures, a field pocket guide, and conducting field trainings for enhanced wildfire coordination

Lebanon

In Lebanon, the U.S. Forest Service has supported wildfire prevention and response for many years in partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces, Civil Defense, civil society organizations, and local communities. At the national level, the U.S. Forest Service organized a multi-year series of trainings on the Incident Command System to facilitate interagency wildfire response, and provided early wildfire response hand tools and communication equipment. At the community level — in the scale at which the U.S. Forest Service Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) supports reforestation projects — volunteer wildfire response squads were trained and equipped in selected communities in a manner that was consistent with the National Strategy of Wildfire Management.

The U.S. Forest Service Lebanon Reforestation Initiative provided early response fire engines in two high fire risk communities and, more broadly, implemented fire prevention plans for LRI-supported reforestation sites. Finally, the American “Firewise” community fire prevention program was adapted to the Lebanese context, piloted in a forested community, and is set to be replicated elsewhere throughout the country.

Ethiopia

Anthropogenic fire has been a part of the lowland range ecosystems in Ethiopia for millennia. However, two generations of fire expertise were recently lost due to a misunderstanding of upland forest fire laws. Combined with climate change and population pressures, a lack of appropriately managed fire in the range ecosystem resulted in the unnatural proliferation of certain invasive and indigenous brush species across the landscape.

Since 2007, the U.S. Forest Service has provided fire expertise to USAID and USAID partners in Ethiopia to try to restore these ecosystems and train local partners on sustainable fire management. Through a series of workshops with partners like Save the Children and

CARE, over 200 community members and civil society staff have been trained on fire application, suppression, response, and planning in the southern rangelands of Ethiopia, including over 30 trained trainers.

U.S. Forest Service experts have also collaborated with researchers from the Government of Ethiopia to examine how proper fire management could increase carbon sequestration in rangeland areas, as well as improve biodiversity and overall ecosystem health.

Malawi

Training in fire suppression and prevention has defined U.S. Forest Service engagement in Malawi. U.S. Forest Service fire management training has helped to cultivate and sustain an in-country network of fire management specialists across multiple sectors. Training has also been regionally specific, defined in part by the areas in which the trainings have been held, including Nyika National Park, Mulanje Mountain, and the Viphya Plantations.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

U.S. Forest Service technical experts work with the Government of DRC, the World Wide Fund for Nature, a local ranching company, and local communities to design and implement a fire management plan in the Lac Tumba area — an area defined by diverse landscapes and socioeconomic interests. Lac Tumba features a forest / rangeland mosaic where ranching interests and communities burn portions of the landscape to maintain grasslands for cattle and livelihood production while conservation groups seek to preserve bordering forest areas. The U.S. Forest Service helped design and implement a comprehensive fire management plan to facilitate cooperation between various parties' burning regimes, monitor results of this approach, and raise awareness of the ecology of fire on the range and forest lands. U.S. Forest Service experts train joint local fire units each year as part of a larger management plan in the province.

The Republic of Congo

In partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the Government of Congo, and the University of Edinburgh, U.S. Forest Service fire researchers work to understand the fire ecology of transition zones between grasslands and forests on the Bateke Plateau



area of Congo. Researchers work with local experts to establish a long-term research project with goals to protect gorilla habitat, increase forest carbon sequestration, and understand successional ecosystems.

Mozambique

The U.S. Forest Service provided a series of trainings to the Gorongosa National Park staff on fire management. This training focused on fire suppression and prevention and joint planning sessions with surrounding communities to support the sustainable management of one of the most iconic parks in the country.

West Africa

The U.S. Forest Service works with 33 communities in the Upper Guinean Tropical Forest of Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Cote D'Ivoire to establish and manage more than 4,000 hectares of community forests. On the northern border of Sierra Leone, 18 communities established fire force committees that are responsible for the prevention and control of wild brush fires. In the Nimba Mountains of Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, 15 communities established fire brigades. Management activities include constructing fire belts around community forests and fields, controlled burns, and planting fire-resistant agroforestry species such as cashew. Fire force members also sensitize communities to fire management practices and by-laws, and educate residents about fire protection and prevention methods.
