



Dear members of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks:

This second issue of the International Forest Fire News (IFFN) / Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) Global Wildland Fire Network Bulletin is brought to you with a slight delay. In the first issue of 3 June 2005 we announced a sequence of bulletins of 4 to 8 weeks, or at the occasion of special events. The wildland fire season 2005, however, kept us quite busy here – thus we excuse for the delay. As indicated earlier, the Bulletins will communicate news on special wildland fire events, policies and politics from all over the fire world to you by highlighting headlines, short news and links to the GFMC web pages for more details. Archived Bulletins will be available at the GFMC media page at: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/media/news.htm>

Recent events and developments (June – mid of August 2005):

South East Asia

Since the beginning of August 2005, peat conversion fires, numerous slash-and-burn agriculture fires and wildfires affecting forests and other vegetation on Sumatra, Indonesia, have been causing haze problems in the region and in particular the Klang Valley, comprising Kuala Lumpur, the administrative capital Putrajaya, Port Klang and other cities in Malaysia. Mid-August, air quality emergencies were declared in various locations of Malaysia. The Vice President of Indonesia, as Head of Bakornas (National Coordination Board for Disaster Management), issued a decree to establish a Forest Fire Disaster Management Team. The governments of Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam sent fire crews to support firefighting operations. Australia sent a group of experts. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in cooperation with the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), issued two Situation Reports (Sitrep 1 and 2, 16 and 19 August 2005). The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit was (and still is) the focal point in OCHA-Geneva. On 23 August 2005 the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Klaus Toepfer, invited the GFMC for a briefing on the SE Asian and the global wildland fire situation, respectively. The briefing was attended by staff of UNEP headquarters and the European Office, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, the UNECE Trade Development and Timber Division and the ISDR Secretariat represented by its Director, Mr. Sálvano Briceño. At this meeting it was decided to develop a joint activity on wildland fire issues discussed, especially with reference to the problems of peatland fires in Southeast Asia.

Interesting satellite imageries and comments on 15 August 2005:

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GFMCnew/2005/08/0815/20050815_sea.htm

Recent update with UNEP/OCHA Sitrep 1 and 2 on 19 August 2005:

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GFMCnew/2005/08/0819/20050819_sea.htm

Southern Europe: Wildfires in Spain and Portugal

A large number of wildfires on the Iberian Peninsula, many of them started by arson and negligence, triggered attention of the media and the public worldwide. To briefly summarize the situation in Spain and Portugal as of 29 August 2005:

Spain: About 13,500 fires have affected a total of ca. 56,000 ha forests and other wooded lands, and 70,000 ha non-wooded lands. Out of the total of 829 investigated fires 247 were caused by negligence and 125 were set intentionally (26 set by pyromaniacs, 15 set for vengeance, 6 due to other conflicts). So far the fire season in Spain counted 17 fatalities and about 2786 evacuations.

Portugal: Until 29 August ca. 180,000 ha were affected by wildfires. In addition more than 100 homes and almost 500 farm buildings were destroyed. So far 16 people died on the fire scenes this year among which 11 fire fighters were lost. About 80% of all fires were either set intentionally or caused by negligence. 127 persons have been arrested for arson. Portugal called the European Union for assistance in firefighting.



International Forest Fire News (IFFN) is an activity of the FAO/UNECE Team of Specialists on Forest Fire and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC). IFFN is published on behalf of UNECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission and is serving the UN-ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN). Starting in June 2005 the IFFN/ GFMC Bulletin will provide short news and global fire update information to members of Regional Wildland Fire Networks. GFMC Website: <http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de>

Southern Europe: Firefighter Aircraft Accidents in France, Spain and Portugal

Aerial firefighting in Southern Europe involves the use of state-owned aircraft (fixed wing, helicopters), contractors and assistance given by neighbouring countries. Currently Portugal has received assistance by several member states of the European Union. This year has seen a number of fatal accidents in France, Spain and Portugal:

- 7 June 2005: PZL-M-18 Dromader, Beariz, Orense, Spain, pilot died
- 19 July 2005: Tracker, Draguignan, Var, France, pilot survived
- 1 August 2005: Canadair CL-415, Calvi, Corsica, France, pilot and co-pilot died
- 20 August 2005: Tracker, Ardeche, France, pilot and co-pilot died
- 24 August 2005: "Avioneta monomotor", Sao Pedro do Sul, Portugal, pilot survived
- 28 August 2005: Air Tractor, Escorca, Mallorca, Spain, pilot died

North America: U.S.A. and Canada

More acres consumed by fewer fires: Prior to this year's wildland fire season, fire behaviour experts figured that abundant winter and spring rains in the drought-stricken Southwest would lead to an increase in potential wildfire activity. They were right. - Alaska: "*Hot weather. Dry forests. Turbulent masses of unstable air that conjure up thunderstorms*". Mix these ingredients from Alaska's changing climate and you produce a 2005 fire season that starts early, ends late and incinerates millions more acres than normal. Lightning triggered more wildland fires this summer in Alaska than ever noted before, sparking one of the worst, longest running burns on record, according to state fire and federal fire officials. Through 26 August 2005, 598 fires had scorched 1.5 million ha across the state, less than the record 2.7 million ha in 2004 but more than any previous year except 1957, said John See, the state's regional fire manager for coastal Alaska (see media report below). Canada also experienced extreme lightning fire situations. Strafed by more than 150,000 lightning strikes in the space of five days, Ontario's forests on 9 August 2005 experienced 147 active forest fires in the province, 63 of which started 8 August, and more than 1,500 firefighters on the ground in the battle - 207 of whom were on loan from the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and the western provinces.

Sizzling pace of lightning strikes kindles third-worst fire season

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/media/2005/news_20050829_us.htm

Fires across Alaska – see some interesting satellite images of 15 August 2005

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GFMCnew/2005/08/0815/20050816_al.htm

Eurasia: The Russian Federation

In Russia, in the same latitudinal boreal belt, a relatively mild wildland fire season continued to relieve the budget-stressed services responsible for wildland fire fighting, especially considering the restructuring / decentralization of the fire fighting responsibilities from central (federal) to regional level. According to the latest satellite-derived analysis provided by the Sukachev Institute for Forest (Krasnoyarsk) the total area burned by 27 August 2005 in the Russian Federation was 8.4 million ha. This figure of area burned includes all vegetation types (forest and non-forested land on the whole territory of the Russian Federation). The fire statistics for forest lands of the Federal Russian Forest Fund compiled by Avialesookhrana on 28 August 2005 report 309,545 ha forested and 90,157 ha non-forested lands affected by wildfires. Recent fires included peat fires that have caused air pollution in Khabarovsk region, Far East of Russia, in the second half of August. Alarming reports on climate change impacts on Siberia's wetlands concentrate on permafrost thawing – with implications on fire regime alterations.

A recent satellite image of 6 August 2005 shows fires burning around Baikal Lake.

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GFMCnew/2005/08/0808/20050808_ru.htm

Update of the Global Wildland Fire Network

As announced in the first bulletin, here are some news from the UNISDR Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN). On the GWFN homepage:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/globalNet.html>

The recent developments are summarized in the folder "**The Global Wildland Fire Network: Rationale and Introduction**":

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/RationaleandIntroduction.html>

Network members and interested readers will find comprehensive information on:

- FAO Ministerial Meeting on Forests and the 17th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry, both meetings recommending the FAO to develop jointly with GWFN and UNISDR a global strategy for international cooperation in wildland fire management (March 2005)

- United Nations Forum on Forest (5th Session, May 2005, with no significant impacts on wildland fire-related issues)

Recent developments of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks, including meetings and consultations, are found on the right side of the GWFN homepage, or summarized on this website:

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/Consultations_2004.html

The activities of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks included regional consultations and a multilateral wildland fire exercise in Southeast Europe (April 2005) and the upcoming Regional Central Asia Wildland Fire Management Study Tour and consultation (Irkutsk, Russian Federation, September 2005).

The FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) are working together with partners from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to develop a “Strategy for International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management”. Regional consultations have been held in South America, Mesoamerica and the Caribbean in May and June 2005. The regional strategy will be finalized in the end of 2005.

Meanwhile the FAO continues to compile a thematic report on wildland fire management for the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005 (FRA-2005), in cooperation with the Regional Wildland Fire Networks.

News from Wildland Fire Research

The GFMC has updated the web page on “International Wildland Fire Research Programmes”. It includes information on a recently launched pan-European research programme **FIRE PARADOX**. This new international and interdisciplinary forest fire research programme has been granted by the European Commission in mid 2005. With the participation of 31 institutions from 12 countries the project “FIRE PARADOX - An Innovative Approach of Integrated Wildland Fire Management Regulating the Wildfire Problem by the Wise Use of Fire: Solving the Fire Paradox” will be conducted between 2006 and 2009. See preliminary information on these GFMC web pages:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/programmes/other/intr.html>

and

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/programmes/other/FireParadox.html>

Upcoming soon: 4th International Wildland Fire Conference (6-10 May 2007, Madrid, Spain)

Please make a bookmark in your calendar: At the [International Wildland Fire Summit](#), held in Sydney on 8 October 2003, the invitation presented by the representatives of Spain to organize and host the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference in 2007, was accepted. The first general announcement of the Conference was presented at United Nations the 17th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (Rome, 15 March 2005), the 11th Session of the UN-ISDR Interagency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (Geneva, 25 May 2005) and at the 5th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, New York, 18 May 2005. The Conference will be held under the auspices of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Conference Objectives

Building on the objectives and outputs of the previous International Wildland Fire Conferences (Boston 1989, Vancouver 1997, Sydney 2003), the objectives of the 4th Conference will be the following

- Provide a forum for forest fire management leaders, politicians, professionals, researchers and practitioners from throughout the globe to discuss and work on critical fire issues affecting people, communities, resources and ecosystems in all Regions and work on a cooperative way in the consolidation of a Global Wildland Fire Management Strategy.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks and support their links into a Global Wildland Fire Network
- Provide a forum to display innovations, new technologies, products and methods for wildland fire management and interact with the Conference participants.

Preliminary Conference Website:

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/course/meeting/2007/meet2007_01.htm

Update on International Forest Fire News (IFFN)

Careful readers have certainly noted that IFFN issue No. 30, which has been distributed some weeks ago, was misprinted. By mistake, the contents of IFFN No. 30 – distributed to about 1000 institutions worldwide – included the text of IFFN No. 29 (Special Issue on the 2003 Global Wildland Fire Summit).

Currently the Timber Section, UN-ECE Trade Division, in Geneva is seeking a solution for printing the correct version of this issue. IFFN No. 30 is a special issue on “Prescribed Burning in Northwest Europe and the Baltic Region”. This very interesting issue with contributions from nine European countries is available on the GFMC / IFFN website:

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/iffn_30/content30.htm

Since two weeks IFFN No. 31 is being distributed worldwide – a special issue covering “The ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network”. For those interested to read the summary of the 2004 activities online:

http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/iffn/iffn_31/content31.htm

Inside GFMC

GFMC activities are regularly updated in the GFMC calendar at:

<http://www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/intro/about4.html>