

FIRES

Fire Interdisciplinary Research on Ecosystem Services

Fire and climate change in UK moorlands and heathlands
A series of four transdisciplinary seminars, March 2008 to June 2009

PUBLIC LECTURE

Tuesday 24th June 2008

'Wildfires: an American perspective on a global issue'

Jim Smalley

MIFireE, SFPE

Manager, NFWA Wildland Fire Protection
National Fire Protection Association, USA

*Cordingley Lecture Theatre, Humanities Bridgeford Street,
University of Manchester*

Programme

5.10pm Posters and wine reception
6.00pm Public lecture and discussion
7.15pm Close

POSTERS: Submission of posters for display before the lecture are welcomed. Details on registration form.

TO REGISTER: Registration is free and open to all. Places are limited. Please register using the form downloadable from <http://www.fires-seminars.org.uk/downloads/> or from Debra Whitehead (contact details below), preferably by 2nd June. [This event immediately follows the second FIRES seminar for invited participants. We regret that we cannot accept applications for the invited seminar.]

FURTHER INFORMATION from Seminar Two page of website, or contact **Debra Whitehead**, School of Environment and Development, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK.
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<http://www.fires-seminars.org.uk>

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ABSTRACT

Wildfires occur in every state of the USA at some time during each year. But following more than a decade of increasingly severe wildfires, it is now becoming difficult to define a 'normal peak fire season'. A wildland fire exceeding 100,000 acres (40,470 ha) was a severe occurrence 10-20 years ago and the sign of an unusual fire season. Today, these large-scale fires are no longer the exception; they are starting to define what a normal peak fire season may be.

Since 1910, the rule to exclude all fires from national and state forests in America resulted in the accumulation of dead and dying vegetation, volatile fuels for intense and quickly moving forest fires. When a 1988 fire covering over a million acres burned for months in America's first national forest (Yellowstone National Park), fire agencies and law makers realised that the policy was flawed. However, during the eight decades of excluding fire, millions of homes had been built close to or within forest boundaries. Last year, a series of large wildfires in southern California resulted in a loss of nearly 2,000 homes. Already this year, over 150 structures have been destroyed by wildfire in a single event.

Every year becomes the worst fire season ever. Fire occurrence and behavior are similar in many countries of the world. How much does global climate change affect forest fires? How large can these fires grow? Where will this growing trend be likely to take us, and what should and can we do about it? Are there lessons for managing wildfire risk in the UK?

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Jim Smalley is the manager of NFPA Wildland Fire Protection and the National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Program, an initiative that, since 1986, has provided information, research, training, and education materials concerning the severity and impact of wildfires that threaten homes and other structures. He has produced over two dozen video programs on various aspects of the wildland/urban interface including fire fighter safety and fire behavior.

He spent several weeks at the 1987 fires in southern Oregon and northern California, the Yellowstone fires in 1988, and subsequent interface fires in Colorado, Michigan, Idaho, and Oakland, California. He was instrumental in the development and management of the *Firewise Communities* workshops and the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program that provides incentives and guidance for residential developments in wildland areas to plan, perform, and evaluate local mitigation efforts to avoid disaster from wildfires.

In addition, he serves as the NFPA Staff Liaison for the Fire Service Training Committee and the Fire Service Geographic Information System (GIS) Data Exchange Committee, the Executive Secretary for the Wildland Fire Management Section, one of NFPA's special interest membership sections.

Jim Smalley is a graduate of the University of Arkansas, Southern Arkansas University, and the University of Delaware, with an A.S. degree in Fire Protection, a B.S. in Education, and a Graduate Certificate in Association Management. He has served on several fire departments (including Chief of Burke Volunteer FD in Fairfax County VA) and came to NFPA from the US Fire Administration. Before the US Fire Administration, he was director of state fire service training in Arkansas. He is a professional member of the Society of American Foresters, the Institute of Fire Engineers, and the Society of Fire Protection Engineers.

His recent publications include:

'Wildfires in the United States: Future Trends and Challenges', *Wildfire News & Notes*, June 2008.

'Still Standing: Communities Can Survive Wildfires', *Wildland Firefighter* magazine, February/March 2008.

Protecting Life and Property from Wildfire, editor, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA): Quincy MA, 2005.

'At Close Range: The role of homeowner insurance in the wildland/urban interface', *NFPA Journal*® *Online Exclusive*, September/October 2006.

'Wildland Fire Management' (Chapter 13-5), *Fire Protection Handbook, 20th Edition*, NFPA: Quincy MA, 2008.

'Running Wild', *Fire Prevention & Fire Engineers Journal*, Institute of Fire Engineers, July 2004.