



### **Tomorrow's Fire Managers are in College Today**

On a gray day in mid-April, 50 students got an up-close look at wildfire in the Red River Valley of northwestern Minnesota. Dressed in yellow gear and spread out over a dry, grassy area, the students tried their hands at different equipment--hoselines from a wildfire engine, a fire pump to control a back-burn and a drip torch. They learned how to make fire do various things including, by day's end, disappear.

Fires -- both prescribed and wildland -- are key components of resource management, and it's a big advantage for students in natural resources to get hands-on training for fighting and managing fires.

Each spring, students at the University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC), have a chance to receive training that qualifies them to work with natural resources agencies around the country. Students in forestry class attend 32 extra hours of training in the evenings to qualify. This year they completed their training on April 16 with a live burn in a natural history area not far from the UMC campus.

"These are our future land managers," said instructor Larry Anderson of the Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge. "The training UMC arranges is unique because it exposes the students to multiple natural resource agencies."

"It was real beneficial to see how weather and topography affect wildfires," said Jim Pendroy, a junior in water resources from Spring Lake Park, Minnesota. "Safety and organization are stressed a lot, with the goal of protecting all firefighters. I want to go out and get more advanced training."

Instructors are volunteers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and The Nature Conservancy -- all agencies that hire the newly-trained.

The course provides the Fish and Wildlife Service an initial look at students, their work ethic, and their basic abilities, says instructor Dave Bennett, a manager at the Rydell National Wildlife Refuge. At the same time, students see first-hand what fire work involves and get an understanding of what's required to work in the field. At the end of training this spring, UMC had trained more than 225 students at the basic firefighter level in six years.

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