

National Fire Plan

Firefighter Preparedness ~ Colorado 2003



Durango, CO: A year ago, Durango became the new home of the 20-person San Juan Interagency Hotshot Crew, one of five such crews in Colorado and 92 in the U.S. – and the first ever in southwest Colorado – thanks to the National Fire Plan.

Hotshot crews are professional wildland fire suppression units specifically trained, organized, and equipped for rapid response to wildfires. Hotshot crews are often referred to as the backbone of the fire resources. They hike in to fires on the steepest and most rugged terrain and are self-contained – prepared to spend two days without additional support.

In April 2003 the San Juan Hotshots were officially certified as a Type I crew. “Being a brand new crew, they really thought it was important to do their best and to prove themselves during their first year,” said Crew Superintendent Shawna Legarza.

Their certification comes within a year of the crew’s formation. The crew is considered experienced and flexible enough to handle assignments in initial attack, structure protection, and large burnouts. As a national resource, the crew may respond to natural disasters as well as wildland fires. During the off season, part or all of the crew will assist with hazardous fuels reduction projects and prescribed fires both locally and regionally.

In 2002 the crew worked on the Missionary Ridge Fire, as well as 12 others in five states. “We had great performance reviews on fires,” said Legarza, “which reflected how well the crew was able to pull together during the intense fire season.” The San Juan Hotshots live and train at the Engineer Guard Station north of Durango, and are proud to be the highest-elevation hotshot crew in the nation. During a fire season, hotshot crews work, eat, and live together. They are required to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, and must be available within two hours of a call.



For more information on the crew, check out their website at www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan/fire/SanJuanHotshots/page1.htm