

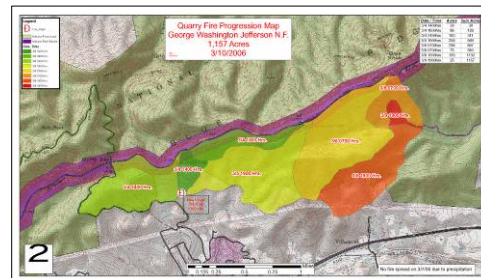
## Yes Virginia, There Is Fire in the East Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina / Virginia National Fire Plan – Firefighting

On March 4, 2006, the relative humidity near the Blue Ridge Parkway was reported at 8%. Zeph Cunningham, a NPS park ranger on the Blue Ridge Parkway and Jack Jones Jr., Chief of Bedford County Fire and Rescue had never seen such conditions in Virginia; a relative humidity that low was more typical of the western United States. In addition, there were a large amount of dry fuels in the area - dormant brush, hardwood slash, standing snags, as well as deadfall caused by Southern Pine Beetle, Gypsy Moth (Oak), and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. Steep terrain with significant wildland-urban interface completed the perfect conditions for the 1,157 acre Quarry Fire. The fire started on private land and within 25 minutes it was burning on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Within an hour the fire grew to 100 acres and burned onto Forest Service lands.

Acting immediately, a Type 3 Incident Commander from the Blue Ridge Parkway assumed command of the incident. Road closures and structural protection were necessary on the first day and part of the Parkway remained closed on March 5. The fire burned upslope against the wind with three to six foot flame lengths and made two large runs with some crowning.

On March 6, a Southern Area Type 1 Incident Management Team (IMT) assumed command of the incident. Rain and some snow dramatically reduced fire activity and kept the fire in check, making for a safe transition of command from the Type 3 Team to the Type 1 Team. On March 7, favorable weather enabled burnout operations to begin. A community meeting held in Montvale, Virginia brought one hundred and fifty community members as well as significant media interest.

Over the next two days burnout operations were completed and crews made significant progress on rehabilitation. On March 11, the Type 1 Incident Management Team transitioned the incident back to a Type 3 organization. Demobilization was underway as well as continuing mop up and patrol. However, two days later, the fire spotted in three locations due to high winds. Winds reached speeds of fifty mph on March 15 and 16. The fire was 100% contained as of March 16.



*Quarry Fire Progression Map.*



*Quarry Fire Burnout Operations. NPS Photo by Frank Graham.*



*Quarry Fire Crown Run.*

The Quarry fire was successfully managed under a Unified Command with USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, Virginia Department of Forestry, and several Rural Fire Departments from Bedford and Roanoke Counties. Some personnel on the incident had been previously trained through the Bedford County Interagency Wildland Fire Training Academy, a program supported by Rural Fire Assistance funds under the National Fire Plan.

According to John Garrison, Chief Ranger on the Blue Ridge Parkway “the Quarry Fire was a prime example of how the RFA has supported an interagency effort to improve fire suppression effectiveness and enhance firefighter safety. The capacity of fire control agencies at the local, state and federal level were significantly increased due to RFA and among the many efficiencies was solid cooperative working relations. How many fire fatalities and near misses have been because of a failure to establish those relations at an incident leading to a violation of a 10 & 13 standard? Those critical relationships are developed over time and with investment of time. The folks at the Bedford Academy made that investment....and it paid big dividends on the Quarry Fire.”



*Quarry Fire smoke column.*

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