

Lessons From Fire History Past And Future

A Regional Workshop On Eastern U.S. Fire History

Information on the history of fire is increasingly being used by public land managers, community leaders, the press, and state and federal policy-makers. Although fire interests (publicity, research) in the eastern United States pales when compared with that of the west, the eastern region has a rich and somewhat hidden fiery past. The past and future significance of fire is at the forefront of many contentious issues (e.g., emissions from prescribed burning, decline of oak and other fire-mediated forest types, use of fire in forest management).

Workers from the Missouri Tree-Ring Laboratory hosted this two-day workshop that was sponsored by the MU School of Natural Resources, MU Department of Forestry, U.S. Forest Service-Northern Research Station, and the Joint Fire Science Program. The purpose of this workshop was to highlight applications of fire history information focusing on eastern U.S. examples. The workshop was held at the University of Missouri-Columbia and featured nine formal presentations and a final discussion session. The workshop connected about 250 land managers, fire scientists, professionals, and students from over 12 states. Topics of presentations were: paradigms in fire research (S. Pyne, Arizona State Univ.), modeling presettlement fire intervals (R. Guyette, Univ. of Missouri), fire in the tallgrass prairie (R. Anderson, Illinois State Univ.), Appalachian fire history (H. Grissino-Mayer, Univ. of

Tennessee), fire history information uses (M. Stambaugh, Univ. of Missouri), fire and natural community management (D. Drees, Missouri Dept. of Conservation), silviculture and fire (D. Dey, USFS-Northern Research Station), uses and misuses of fire history information in natural resource management (R. Masters, Tall Timbers Research Station).

Emerging questions were:

- Fire is a subject with no central scientific discipline. If fire is brought to a center of inquiry, what would it look like? Where would it be?
- How might changes in climate and population affect how we use fire now and in the future?
- How to restore savanna, woodland, and forest ecosystems (i.e., where did it occur historically, where is it needed now)? How to restore these fire dependent communities while meeting other objectives (i.e., producing quality forest products, enhancing wildlife habitat, meeting water and air quality standards)?
- How to transfer information about the historic importance of fire to eastern forests? What are the challenges and opportunities?

Aside from the emerging questions two recurring discussion points were the inextricable past and present link between humans and fire and the need for more information on the historic controls of fire occurrence and frequency. Specific controls discussed were those of humans, climate, grazing ani-



Left to right: Professor Rose-Marie Muzika (MU-Forestry) summarizes Missouri fire and human history in Westphalia, MO, with Professor Susan Flader (MU-History), Kyle Steele (Forestry graduate student), Stacy Clark (Forest Service-Alabama), Paul Nelson (Forest Service-Mark Twain National Forest), Professor Stephen Pyne (Arizona State University), and Tim Nigh (Missouri Department of Conservation).

mals, and topography. The historic degree of influence of each of these controls has significant implications in terms of the alterations imposed on surface fuels (e.g., loadings, type) and vegetative succession (e.g., species selection). Certainly each control had varying levels of importance across the ecosystems of the eastern U.S., but information about how they varied in time and location would be valuable for understanding

how management considering these controls might proceed in the future.

*Michael C. Stambaugh, Richard P. Guyette, and Erin R. McMurry
Missouri Tree-Ring Laboratory,
University of Missouri-Columbia*

*Daniel C. Dey
US Forest Service,
Northern Research Station*

Mastodon State Historic Site Acquires Wetland Acreage

Mastodon State Historic Site, near Imperial, recently acquired 6.14 acres of forested wetland, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources announced recently. The property is connected to the historic site's current boundary along West Outer 55 and Old Antonio roads.

The property was formerly owned by Rock Creek Sewer District. Because the property has wetland soils and is in the

Rock Creek floodway, it was suitable for wetland mitigation. The sewer district administrator, Eric Knoll, negotiated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Department of Natural Resources to manage the area as a forested wetland to mitigate for wetlands the district disturbed on the Mississippi River during new construction. A proposal in the state historic site's conceptual development plan, which is the long-range development plan for the

site, calls for a wetland trail in the area.

Sewage from the Rock Creek valley is now pumped to a facility in Kimmswick. The former sewage treatment plant was dismantled, and the sewer district landscaped the area with undulating vegetation, appropriate trees and a drainage access to the creek.

Mastodon State Historic Site is located 20 miles south of St. Louis, off Interstate 55 at the Imperial Main Street exit. The site contains the Kimmswick Bone

Bed, an archaeological site listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and a museum that features a mastodon skeleton replica and ice age artifacts.

For more information, contact Mastodon State Historic Site at (636) 464-2976 or the Department of Natural Resources at 1-800-334-6946 (voice) or 1-800-379-2419 (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf). To learn more about Missouri's state parks and historic sites, visit www.mostatetparks.com.