

FRANKLIN AWARDS FOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN COOPERATIVE FIRE PROTECTION



April J. Baily

Ensuring that all citizens benefit is a critical part of the USDA Forest Service's Cooperative Fire Protection programs. Therefore, encouraging increased interaction by our State forestry fire service cooperators with underserved communities is vital.

Franklin Awards Established

With this goal in mind, Jerry T. Williams, Director of the Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management (F&AM), has conferred four annual awards to recognize outstanding efforts by State forestry service employees, units, or groups in outreach to underserved communities. Named for Benjamin Franklin, the founder of the volunteer firefighting force, the awards are for:

- Volunteer fire assistance (VFA),
- State fire assistance (SFA),
- Management of Federal excess personal property (FEPP), and
- Overall excellence in reaching underserved communities (through a special Director's Award).

Not all awards are given every year.

2000

The 2000 awards were presented on October 4, 2000, at the annual awards banquet for the National

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The Franklin Awards recognize outstanding efforts by State employees, units, or groups in fire protection outreach to underserved communities.

Association of State Foresters in Kansas City, KS. Bill Terry, national training officer for F&AM, presented the awards.

VFA Award. VFA is designed to help small communities improve (or begin) fire protection. The VFA award is for the State that demonstrates the best outreach to help underserved communities improve fire protection.

The late Tom Roberts was the forest fire supervisor for Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources

(DNR). Tom's leadership in developing, implementing, and supporting the State's Forest Fire Protection Grant Program immensely improved the DNR's and communities' wildland firefighting capabilities.

The publicity received by the grant program has improved DNR's relationships and communications with local communities and raised local awareness of the volunteer fire departments. The grants have provided local departments with training and personal protective equipment, enhancing firefighting



Don Johnson (right) accepting the 2000 Franklin Award for volunteer fire assistance on behalf of the late Tom Roberts and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Presenting the award is Bill Terry, national training officer for the USDA Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management. Photo: USDA Forest Service, 2000.

capabilities and firefighter safety. Because Tom was so instrumental in getting the program off the ground, F&AM was pleased to present him and the Wisconsin DNR with the 2000 Franklin Award for VFA.

FEPP Award. FEPP is made available to help State and local fire services obtain equipment that might otherwise be unaffordable. The FEPP award is for the State that demonstrates the best outreach to help underserved communities equip themselves to improve fire protection.

George Cooper manages the Florida Division of Forestry FEPP Program and the Rural Community Fire Protection Cooperative Equipment Lease Program. Under his leadership, the State of Florida has provided millions of dollars in FEPP to underfunded communities across the State, including vehicles, pumps, tanks, and self-contained breathing apparatus.

George has implemented an Internet program that allows local departments to get information and print needed forms easily and quickly. Additional duties include managing the VFA grant program, planning and administering the training for incident management teams, and maintaining the statistical database for fire response time. Because of his leadership and skills in managing the FEPP program, F&AM was proud to present George and the Florida Division of Forestry with the 2000 Franklin Award for FEPP.

2001

The 2001 awards were presented on October 3, 2001, at the luncheon for the National Association of State Foresters in Hot Springs, AR. Janet Anderson-Tyler, Assistant Director of F&AM, made the presentations.

VFA Award. In the past, surplus firefighting equipment was often destroyed in Texas because the owners feared liability suits. Today,

that is no longer the case. The Texas Forest Service (TFS) was able to obtain legislation protecting donors from liability if they give surplus equipment to volunteer fire departments.*

The TFS hosted a Volunteer Firefighter Appreciation Day in Llano, TX, attended by more than 570 volunteer firefighters from 168 departments representing 85 counties. More than \$500,000 in equipment was placed with volunteer fire departments. A similar event placed more than \$200,000 in equipment with departments in serious need along the Texas–Mexico border. In total, the program has placed nearly \$7 million worth of equipment. In recognition of these accomplishments, F&AM is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2001 Franklin Award for VFA is the TFS.

SFA Award. The Franklin Award for SFA also went to the TFS. Beginning in 1998, the TFS implemented wildfire mitigation outreach initiatives, with cooperative wildland fire prevention/education teams being deployed at the State and national level in Texas.** The teams carried the prevention and Firewise messages to communities of every size, from major metropolitan areas such as San Antonio to unincorporated villages.

The initiative was expanded in 1999 to include the “Living on the Edge” traveling display, seen by an estimated 50,000 residents in communities of all sizes. In 2000, the operation was expanded from 3 to



Earl Peterson (left) accepting the 2000 Franklin Award for Federal excess personal property on behalf of George Cooper and the Florida Division of Forestry. Presenting the award is Bill Terry, national training officer for the USDA Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management. Photo: USDA Forest Service, 2000.

* For more information, see Traci Bowen, “Texas Volunteer Firefighters Benefit From New Legislation,” *Fire Management Today* 62(4) [Fall 2002], pp. 51–52.

** For more information, see Judith K. Kissinger, “Interagency Teams Prevent Fires From Alaska to Florida,” *Fire Management Notes* 59(4) [Fall 1999]: 13–18.

20 specialists and technicians. It currently uses a community empowerment model to bring Firewise practices to communities statewide. In 2000 and 2001, 11 SFA Urban Wildland Interface Grants of more than \$550,000 were awarded to help deliver wildfire mitigation and Firewise assistance statewide.

As a result, 55 communities at risk from wildland fires have established survivable space; posted fire prevention messages; and promoted activities to reduce fire hazards, such as cleanup, slash removal, and fuelbreaks. The communities have employed the entire range of Firewise concepts, including survivable space training for residents, fire service training in wildland/urban interface tactics, evacuation planning, and disaster incident management teams. Community groups are strengthening fire mitigation programs by promoting local ownership and stakeholder involvement. Progress is measured in terms of public participation in fire safety days and slash disposal events.

Additionally, Texas hosted a national Firewise conference in Austin in April 2001. The conference inaugurated a series of regional 1-day seminars serving major wildland/urban interface areas. SFA grants have been awarded to support the initiatives in raising awareness, promoting stakeholder involvement, and installing community survivable space demonstrations.

In recognition of an outstanding SFA program to benefit communities throughout Texas, F&AM is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2001 Franklin Award for SFA is the TFS.

We congratulate our 2000, 2001, and 2002 Franklin Award winners and gratefully acknowledge the outstanding efforts of all our State partners to ensure fire protection for all Americans.

FEPP Award. The Arkansas Forestry Commission's (AFC's) Rural Fire Protection program has targeted 51 communities without fire insurance reductions, along with communities without fire protection within 5 miles (8 km). The AFC has also identified small communities with specific fire protection needs and insufficient funds to meet those needs.

So far, 31 of the 51 targeted communities have been assisted by more than one means, including FEPP on loan. The AFC's aggressive FEPP program does an outstanding job of equipping needful fire departments. In recognition of this accomplishment, F&AM takes pleasure in awarding the 2001 Franklin Award for FEPP to AFC's Rural Fire Protection program.

Director's Award. The AFC also received the coveted Director's Award for 2001. Under the able direction of John Shannon, State Forester, and Robert Summerville, Rural Fire Protection administrator, the AFC has extended an already excellent program to better serve Arkansas communities. Examples include:

- Participation in the Rural Fire Protection Work Group, organized by the Governor, to submit a unified plan and report. One positive effect of the report was a \$50,000 bond issue for the purchase of fire equipment and buildings by rural fire departments.

- The identification of 51 communities in rural areas with the highest insurance rates and the least amount of fire protection. As of May 2001, 31 of those communities have received assistance.
- The location, purchase, and transportation of type 1 fire trucks (for structural fire protection) for rural communities. The cost of these trucks to the communities is \$10,000 to \$15,000, and most are financed through the State's interest-free loan program.
- The creation of an improved Wildland Urban Interface Training course, with assistance from the Forest Service and other States.
- The establishment of a Website that volunteer and rural fire departments can use to access laws, grants, information, and contacts for assistance in organizing, training, and developing local departments.



Texas State Forester Jim Hull receiving the Franklin Award on behalf of the Texas Forest Service from Janet Anderson-Tyler, Assistant Director of the USDA Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management. Photo: USDA Forest Service, 2001.

- Media outreach for publicity on the programs. Much positive information is shared with the public by Arkansas newspapers.

Through outreach and constant communication between Rural Fire Protection Staff and State firefighters, the AFC continues to improve fire protection for rural Arkansas. In recognition of its fine service, F&AM Director Jerry Williams was pleased to present the 2001 Director's Award to the AFC.

2002

The 2002 Franklin Awards brought in some new participants, along with nominations from some past winners. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth presented the winners with their trophies at the annual awards luncheon of the National Association of State Foresters on September 30, 2002.

VFA Award. Thanks to the National Fire Plan, grant monies from the Forest Service for the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) reached an all-time high. DNRC took the monies, supplemented them with funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI) for similar programs, and passed more than \$1 million in grants to Montana's rural fire departments.

The administration of the grants was a collaborative effort of the DNRC with the Forest Service and the USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. By combining grants, DNRC was able to serve diverse applicants, including tribal fire organizations and very small underserved rural fire departments. For its outstanding use of VFA funding and its exem-

plary interagency cooperation, F&AM has awarded the 2002 Franklin Award for VFA to the Montana DNRC.

SFA Award. The Florida Division of Forestry (DOF) created an outstanding program to teach students about the importance of fire in managing ecosystems. The Florida Wildfire Prevention CD-ROM is designed to:

- Show that fire is vital to the health of Florida's ecosystems;

- Teach how prescribed fire benefits Florida's wildlife and prevents disastrous wildfires;
- Promote the importance of wildfire prevention; and
- Provide an educational tool that can be used in the classroom to enhance critical-thinking skills concerning the environment.

Based on interactive games, exercises, and messages, the program helps students understand how fire shapes Florida's natural environment. The CD-ROM is accompanied

FRANKLIN AWARD JUDGES

Nominations for the Franklin Awards came for many deserving parties. The Forest Service assembled excellent panels of judges, people who are committed to fairly applying Government assistance and to providing fire protection to underserved communities. Panel members were:

- Noreen Blair, communication consultant, Forest Service, Office of Communication, Washington, DC (2002);
- Malcolm Gramley, cooperative fire operations officer, Forest Service, Northeastern Area, Radnor, PA (2000–2001);
- Judy Kissinger, public affairs officer, Forest Service, Office of Communication, Washington, DC (2000–2001);
- Joan O'Hara Wehner (nonvoting), business manager, National Association of State Foresters, Washington, DC (2000–2001);
- Mary Owens, civil rights specialist, Forest Service, Civil Rights Staff, Washington, DC (2000);
- Robert Ragos, EEO manager, Forest Service, Civil Rights Staff, Washington, DC (2001);
- Jerry Ross, congressional liaison, Congressional Fire Services Institute, Washington, DC (2001);
- Craig Sharman, government affairs representative, National Volunteer Fire Council, Washington, DC;
- Tom Valluzzi, EEO manager, Forest Service, Civil Rights Staff, Washington, DC (2002);
- Bill Webb, Executive Director, Congressional Fire Services Institute, Washington, DC (2000, 2002); and
- Steve Yaddof, community assistance specialist, Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry, Washington DC (2002).

These judges each gave us a day of their time to examine the nominations and evaluate their merits. Each deserves sincere thanks.

by an instructor's guide. Aimed at students in grades 4 through 6, it was created through a partnership between the DOF and Interactive Training Media, Inc., of Tallahassee, FL. In recognition of an outstanding use of SFA grant funds in an educational effort, F&AM was pleased to present the 2002 Franklin Award for SFA to the Florida DOF.

FEPP Award. The Florida DOF also received the 2002 Franklin Award for FEPP. In 2001, the agency placed 37 trucks with local fire departments, supplemented by 13 State trucks. The focus was on rural communities with populations of less than 10,000 and no tax base. In all, the State has placed about 550 trucks with local departments, along with hundreds of other inventory items. The State's FEPP program serves more than 700 communities, many of which would otherwise have no firefighting equipment.

Director's Award. The Directors Award for 2002 also went to the Florida DOF for its innovative and effective use overall of cooperative fire programs. The DOF not only produced the training CD-ROM that won the Franklin Award for SFA, but also produced a brochure designed to help Florida motorists cope with smoke on the highway. The DOF also spearheaded efforts to pass State legislation providing liability protection for entities that donate equipment, vehicles, or supplies for use in fire and rescue missions.

Additionally, DOF has made a focused effort to complete a wildland fire risk assessment analysis. The analysis will help communities work with State and Federal agencies to better define priorities and improve emergency response, better analyze complex landscapes using geographic information systems, plan for resource needs, and identify resource allocations

based on potentially severe fire problems. For a cooperative fire protection program that serves the needs of Florida residents very well, F&AM was pleased to award the Directors Award for overall excellence to the Florida DOF.

Nominations for Future Awards

F&AM congratulates the Franklin Award winners and gratefully acknowledges the outstanding efforts of our State partners to ensure fire protection for all Americans. Nominations for the Franklin Awards are due each year on May 31. For nomination forms and information on how to nominate units, groups, or individuals, contact your regional director for F&AM or Director, Fire and Aviation Management, Mail Stop 1107, 1400 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, DC 20250-1107. The information is also available on the F&AM Website at <<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/partners/vfa/>>. ■

CONTRIBUTORS WANTED

We need your fire-related articles and photographs for *Fire Management Today*! Feature articles should be up to about 2,000 words in length. We also need short items of up to 200 words. Subjects of articles published in *Fire Management Today* include:

Aviation	Firefighting experiences
Communication	Incident management
Cooperation	Information management (including systems)
Ecosystem management	Personnel
Equipment/Technology	Planning (including budgeting)
Fire behavior	Preparedness
Fire ecology	Prevention/Education
Fire effects	Safety
Fire history	Suppression
Fire science	Training
Fire use (including prescribed fire)	Weather
Fuels management	Wildland-urban interface

To help prepare your submission, see "Guidelines for Contributors" in this issue.