

Governor Carney honors Delaware Forest Service wildfire crew at State Fair



Governor Carney honored the Delaware wildfire crew during ceremonies at the Delaware State Fair.

HARRINGTON (July 27) – Governor John C. Carney, Jr. and Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse celebrated the 90th anniversary of the Delaware Forest Service and honored the wildfire crew that just returned from two weeks battling blazes in Colorado’s Rocky Mountains. The crew, which left the First State on July 8 and returned on July 23, first tackled the 700-acre Wilson Fire near Meeker, Colorado – started by lightning on July 7. The firefighters then moved on to the Grizzly Fire before finishing up on the Dragon Fire – located just south of Rangely, Colorado. Delaware’s team included 17 state and federal firefighters from Delaware and three from West Virginia.

“The Forest Service has done unbelievable work over 90 years,” Governor Carney told the audience. “As we celebrate 98 years of the Delaware State Fair, we’ve got a lot of other milestones that are happening, including the recognition of Delaware’s state forestry service for 90 years of operation and their tremendous work.”

Photos from the event are available on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/delforestservice> or on Flickr at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/101649897@N02/>



Delaware's crew spent two weeks battling blazes in Colorado and were honored by Gov. Carney at the Delaware State Fair. Pictured from left are: Jeff Wilson of Clayton, Sam Topper of Federalsburg, Doug Rawling of Newark, Hannah Small of Dover, Spencer Valenti of Dover, Zach Brown of Lewes, and Daniel Mihok of Camden.



Hannah Small of Dover is shown working with Delaware's wildfire crew on the Grizzly Fire in Colorado. Small is a rookie firefighter who works as a forest health associate with the Delaware Forest Service.



Bart Wilson of Dover and Adam Keever of Newark (in back) are shown here beginning mop-up on the perimeter of the Grizzly Fire, which burned in heavy lodgepole pine slash as a result of mountain pine beetle kill. The crew constructed handline around the perimeter of the fire. Even while working at a 9000-foot elevation, crew boss Erich Burkentine reported that Delaware's firefighters were "doing great" work.



From left, assistant state forester Kyle Hoyd, Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse, Hannah Small of Dover, and Governor John C. Carney Jr. at the State Fair in Harrington. Delaware's wildfire crew was honored after returning from two weeks battling blazes in Colorado. Small is a rookie who completed her first assignment this year.



Delaware's crew is shown battling the Wilson Fire in Colorado's Rocky Mountains. PHOTO CREDIT: Lori Iverson / USFWS



Adam Keever of Newark is constructing handline as part of the Delaware wildfire crew that recently returned from a two-week assignment in Colorado.



Delaware wildfire crew members at the Delaware State Fair: (from left) Brian Jennings, Adam Keever, Nathaniel Sommers, Hannah Small, Spencer Valenti, Sam Topper, Bart Wilson, Nikki Testa, Chris Valenti, Mark Kammer, Zach Brown, and Justin Sauble.

During the ceremony at the Delaware State Fair, state forester Michael A. Valenti presented a timeline of major accomplishments and highlights in the 90 years since the Delaware General Assembly established the state's forestry department on April 25, 1927.

1927: Senate Bill 16 in the General Assembly establishes the State Forestry Department with the agency charged with fire control, state tree nursery, and demonstration areas. William S. Taber was appointed the first State Forester and served for 43 years until 1970.

1930: 173 fires burned nearly 30,000 acres. Six fire towers were erected beginning in 1931 and a system of fire wardens was established.

1936: The Gun Club property (844 acres) was purchased for \$7,000 (\$8.30/acre). Consisting of the historic Redden Lodge, it became the core area for Redden State Forest, now Delaware's largest.

1939: American holly is named the state tree, due to its commercial importance and Delaware's status as the "Holly Capital of the Nation."

1941: The 672-acre Tybout Tract was purchased in southern New Castle County. It became the cornerstone of Blackbird State Forest, now more than 6,000 acres.

1959: The first Delaware Tree Farm was recognized (O.A. Newton and Son)

1970: DNREC takes over management of State Forests and fire control while DDA manages state nursery and landowner assistance

1974: House Bill 770 transfers all forestry functions over to the DDA

1994: State forestlands in southwestern Kent County recognized as Taber State Forest

1999: State Forests total about 10,000 acres

2017: The Delaware Forest Service has 23 staff members including six field foresters and two urban and community foresters. Delaware's state forests now total just over 20,000 acres (thanks to funding from Delaware Open Space/U.S. Forest Legacy Program)

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