

# Twin Peaks



## 2013 Season Report

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Twin Peaks I.A. Fire Crew  
State of Utah ♦ Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands  
271 West Bitterbrush Lane ♦ Draper, UT 84020

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# FIRE SEASON OVERVIEW

The 2013 fire season was non-stop, fun filled action for Twin Peaks. Combining fuels mitigation projects across the State of Utah, with six months of availability for National incident response. We began and finished the season with projects, but the fire season was very active during the months between. Suppressing fires in five different states, and travelling all across Utah for different fuel mitigation projects, the crew saw a lot of beautiful country. There were constant opportunities to gain work experience, build crew cohesion, and further our reputation as one of the best Type 2 IA fire crews in the nation. We pride ourselves in having over the top work ethic, as well as a wide base of fire experience and knowledge. Also in being well organized and professional in all work settings. Twin Peaks did all that they could to make a difference. Whether it was fighting fires head on, or preparing for fires well in advance, in at risk areas.

## THE CHALLENGES BEFORE GOING AVAILABLE

This year there were over sixty applicants to the crew. With many great candidates, it was challenging to pick out the best and brightest. Not only did we have to look at the character of the individuals, we had to assess physical fitness too. This is done by a pre-interview fitness test. Candidates are tested on a mile and a half run for time, pull-ups until failure, maximum push-ups in one minute, and maximum sit-ups in one minute. The interview is conducted by a panel of the leadership at the Lone Peak Wildfire Service Center.

After hiring comes "hell week," in which there are multiple training scenarios, very difficult workouts, and a simulated wildfire exercise in Utah's West Desert. The training focuses on crew organization, certain specific skills, knowledge based classes, and physical fitness. The crew did very well this year and passed the "base review" with flying colors.

The first day of work for the seasonal firefighters was April 29. This year we brought on four rookies, fresh out of the Utah Fire and Rescue Academy. UFRA is managed by Utah Valley University and Twin Peaks offers opportunities for a three year internship

program. Each summer of work equals five college credits towards a wildland degree. These four rookies were in for a rude awakening as there were only two weeks in which to familiarize them with crew policies, procedures, and expectations. This learning is done in a state of mind that is realistic to the job, physically exhausted.

## 2013 SEASON BEGINS

We went available for National Dispatch on May 9. The following Monday, we were sent to Bear Lake, Utah for project work. While still being available for a fire dispatch, we worked forty hours a week for three weeks all the way around Bear Lake. The objective was to remove all the dead trees on the beaches and pile the slash either for chipping or for burning. The sandy beaches proved to be challenging to walk long distances on. Another challenge was constantly having to clean the sand out of our chainsaws. Once a week Lyle Jennings, the crew Superintendent, would surprise the guys with a PT Hike at the high elevation to ensure we would be ready for steep country.



### **Clearing Brush at Bear Lake, Utah**

The next project was also in Northern Utah. Off of the Mirror Lake Highway is a cabin community known as Mon Viso. The large lots have a heavy loading of dead aspen and conifer trees. The objective was to remove the dead material and any low hanging branches on the live trees. The crew worked along the access road, going one-hundred feet in on both sides of the road. With a combination of chainsaw work, chipping, and building burn piles for four days; the crew got a good feel for working through a thick forest. Everyone on the crew had a chance to improve their tree falling and slash carrying skills.



### **Snowy conditions on the Mon Viso Project**

We received our first fire dispatch on the following weekend, Sunday June 2. We were to report to Pecos, New Mexico for the Tres Legunas fire. After a very long drive, the crew arrived mid day and was eager to get to work. The first fire assignment of the year was to burn off of a road to square up the fire and protect some homes in the area. The crew worked late in to the morning until the ground had cooled off enough to walk away from. Sleep that night was short lived as the hot New Mexico sun rudely woke the tired crew. They were not to return to work until later that day. This did not sit right with Lyle Jennings as there had to be some sort of work for which the crew could be utilized. As this was an emerging incident, there was some confusion as to what division we were assigned to, after clearing this up, the Division Supervisor assigned us some work to finish out the day. We were to construct indirect line to create a place to hold the fire, should it get up and move again. In the next few

days the fire did not make any large runs, which provided an opportunity for direct attack. It was a good thing Jennings had been training his crew for steep country when they were at Bear Lake. The New Mexico mountains are very steep and there was a lot of work to be done. The crew put in a hose lay up a hill so steep that a Mark III pump could only push through eight hundred feet of hose before another pump would have to be set up. It took a full day just to get the hose in place, then came the fun part - mop up. The crew diligently hiked the rugged terrain daily and worked full sixteen hour shifts extinguishing every last ember that could possibly cause re-ignition.



### **Kevin Jimenez Hiking with a mark III pump on the Tres Legunas Fire, New Mexico**

As the fire was winding down the demobilization began and resources were being sent home. Twin Peaks was one of the crews that stayed, partly thanks to the hard, thorough work they had done. There was one last division

on the fire that had yet to be worked and that is where Twin was assigned. The first day on the new division Twin was told "direct line cannot be done due to snag hazards." After arriving on scene, Jennings and his three Squad Leaders assessed the situation, the decision was made that with the help of a type 1 helicopter cooling the fires edge it could be slowed enough to allow time for safe, thorough snagging and direct line construction. Three days later the division had been boxed in with direct line and was mopped up. This marked the end of a fourteen day tour and we headed home for much needed rest.



**Scott Copeland - Burning Operation on the Tres Legunas Fire, New Mexico**

The next dispatch came on July 1 from South Fork, Colorado. The West Fork Complex was threatening homes and needed as much help as the Incident Management Team could get. The fire was burning through the San Juan National Forest which had been ravaged by Pine Beetles. The nature of this fire called for different tactics and Twin Peaks was assigned to structure protection. We spent the better part of a week preparing the land around any structure that could be threatened. At this point there was no direct line being constructed. It was just a waiting game to see if the fire would make a move towards the homes. The decision was made that if a short piece of direct line could be put in, we could save a large piece of ground. This line would prevent the fire from getting established in a drainage with heavily concentrated dead and down. The crew worked diligently for the next five days, each day we would get chased out by the possibility of lightning. Due to the elevation, we were very exposed to lightning and wind. Eventually, the direct line objective was a success and served its purpose. Due to the complexity of the snag ridden forest, steep rugged terrain, and environmental factors we were tested. We excelled on our advanced felling techniques and a lot of people were pleasantly surprised because we were so safe and effective. We received amazing remarks from the type 2 incident command team. Another fourteen day

tour was in the books and we made the long drive home.



### **The West Fork Fire, Colorado**

Normally the crew would only have two days at home before going back on call. Because we had worked so hard, had done such a good job, and were feeling the effects of fatigue, Lyle Jennings made a command decision to give us one extra day off. On July 15 a fire call came from the Boise National Forest. This was a preposition assignment due to numerous lightning strikes in the very dry area. From mid June to mid July there was very little rain and high temperatures in Region 4, setting the stage for very high fire potential. The crew was sent to Idaho City for staging, but was quickly turned around. The Sunk Fire had started in the desert west of Boise. We arrived after the sun had gone down and were sent up the hill with headlamps to construct direct line. We worked until midnight and woke up at 0530 for briefing and breakfast. At this time we were the only

crew on the fire, due to a high fire load in the area, and were given a lot of ground to cover. The terrain was rugged and the fire burned 3500 acres, combine that with the hot desert sun and we had our work cut out for us. We put in direct line for a few miles that second day and went back up the following shift to finish the line, or so we thought. The fire ended up making another run around 1030 that day, but the squads were in the right place at the right time. We guided air tankers and helicopters while the division supervisor scouted out the next move. The fire was soon boxed in and had nowhere to go. After two more shifts we were released from the Sunk fire and were sent back to Boise dispatch center for reassignment.



**Rob Whitten - Directing Bucket Drops on the Sunk Fire, Idaho**

After one night in a hotel, and much needed showers, Twin was sent to McCall, Idaho for an emerging incident. The Thunder City fire had started on the border of the Frank Church Wilderness and the Payette National Forest. The only people on scene were a load of smoke jumpers because there was no road access. We were asked to make an attempt to hike in to the fire. Jennings took crew boss trainee, Austin Wilson, with him to see if the hike was doable. After an hour and a half of hiking, and six miles later, Jennings and Wilson determined that the fire was not safely accessible by foot. The next shift we were flown in by helicopter and spent the next five days spiked out on a ridge top. This fire was unique in that it was burning in both the Payette NF and the Frank Church Wilderness, resources were only to engage on the part of the fire that was on the Payette NF territory; typically fires in this wilderness are not suppressed. It was a challenging five days in steep country with the only water support being delivered by helicopters. The complexity of the air support (required to transport, feed, and resupply the crews) provided an opportunity for Dan Walton, a Twin Peaks Squadie, to unofficially train as a helispot manager. Though he did not receive any signatures in his task book (because there was already a trainee) he proved invaluable to the operation. This also gave Scott Copeland, a lead crew member, an opportunity to act as a squad

boss and he did very well. After this spike out the crew timed out and was sent back home for much needed rest and recovery.



### **Dinner Time - Overlooking the Frank Church Wilderness**

Once Twin Peaks was back on the boards, we received a local dispatch near Morgan, Utah. The Yence fire had started from lightning the day before. This fire only had a chance to grow eight acres by the time the crew had arrived on scene. In less than a full shift we completed direct line around our portion of the fire and were released for another night to sleep in our own beds, on a Saturday night. Monday rolled around, and there still had been no assignment. We were sent to Fruitland, Utah for some project work. We put in a wide fuel break behind a home through Pinyon Juniper until 1800 and then came the next dispatch. The Packer Creek fire was burning in the Teton National Forest, near Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This fire had numerous resources already

working on it by the time Twin Peaks arrived. Our first assignment was to grid through a large area and suppress any spot fires we could find. This took up the better part of two days, after which two of the three hotshot crews had been reassigned and we were needed on the direct fires edge for mop up. After the 401 acre Packer Creek fire was fully mopped up and all the hose had been cleaned off of the hill we were reassigned to a fire in eastern Idaho near Pocatello.



**Dylan Demayo - Hose Retrieval on the Packer Creek Fire, Wyoming**

The Franson Fire was threatening a small community near Lava Hot Springs. Once again we arrived on a fire mid day and were sent up

the hill to finish off the shift. The Idaho City Hotshots arrived at about the same time and took the opposite flank. By the end of that shift, Twin Peaks and Idaho City were able to high five at the top of a mountain where we pinched off the fire with direct line. Idaho City was demobed and for the next four days we worked with adjoining resources in an effort to mop up the fire. This was challenging in that there was a lot of heat to extinguish and the only water support came from helicopters in the form of bladder bags and blivets. Every time a bladder bag was emptied meant another long hike to the blivet for a refill. The adjoining resources were worn out and struggling to hold their own. This meant we had to take on a lot of ground and rework numerous areas. After five days of constant hiking and gruelingly long shifts it was time to call the Franson fire controlled. We still had the better part of a week left in our tour and received word that there were houses burning down near Rockport Reservoir in Utah. This is very close to where most of our crew calls home and, though we were quite fatigued, we were all ready and eager to do our best to help the community.



### **Tragic remnants of what many people used to call "Home" - Rockport Fire, Utah**

The crew arrived the morning after the homes burned and, after a thorough briefing, went to work at on a large patch of oak brush below some houses. We received very little directive and communication was an issue. Once again, we were the only resource capable of accomplishing complex assignments. We managed to recruit the help of another crew from out of state, with their help we were able to complete a long piece of direct line that first day. We ended that shift by burning out a patch of fuel that remained near some homes. The following day the squads engaged on unchecked areas, put in a hose lay, and began mop up on the direct line constructed the day before. This fire presented a training opportunity for two of the Squad Bosses, who had a Dozer Boss Task Book. This took them out

of the picture for one shift and the Lead Crew Members had to step in to fill the leadership roles, this was a great success in that four individuals all received training opportunities that day. To finish up the tour, there was a lot of gridding through oak brush to ensure there would be no re-ignition around the remaining homes. We were fatigued, all were happy to have a few days off.



### **Burn out operation on the Rockport Fire, Utah**

## **MID SEASON**

Each year we have students that are on the Twin Peaks Crew that leave mid season to further their education. This year the crew lost four individuals mid season, two of which were Lead Crew Members who went to paramedic school; Scott Copeland, and Ryan Evans. The crew also lost Nicko Paraso; a sawyer, and Ben Holmes; a rookie crewmember.

We received yet another dispatch to Idaho. We were to report to Clayton, Idaho for the Trealor

fire. This fire was initial attacked by some smoke jumpers from McCall, Idaho who assumed command of the fire. Being supported logistically with "hot buckets" of food, we aided in mop-up of the fire as the direct line had been completed before our arrival. For four days there was constant work to be done. Mop up included a steep hike in and out of the fire each day. After the fire was controlled and all the hose was retrieved, we went to Challis, Idaho for reassignment. We were redirected to Salmon, Idaho for preposition. For the next four days, we engaged in project work and crew PT to stay prepared for work in the Salmon-Challis National Forest.



**Ben Parker during a crew yoga session - Salmon Idaho**

A lightning caused fire started close to our location. The Nez Perce fire was putting up a lot of smoke, and the poor access had fire resources scrambling to gain intel. Upon arrival, we were directed to construct a three mile long

P-line in a thick drainage bottom to improve access to the fire. After working a full, difficult, shift the P-line was complete. At briefing the next morning the objectives had changed. Due to the lack of access and helicopter landing sites, the forest manager did not want anyone to engage on the fire. If someone were to get injured it would be next to impossible to extract the individual. The Operations Chief allowed us to go in and ensure the fire would not cross the Nez Perce drainage. If allowed to cross the drainage the fire could have burned over the state line into Montana and threatened many structures. Doing minimal work, and using extreme caution, over the next four days we were able to shore up the drainage bottom.

At this time of the fire season we began to witness the weather changing into more of a wet and cold pattern. Thanks to the diligence of our crew, the forest manager kept us for the full fourteen days. The last day worked part of the crew went up for a final patrol. The rest of us chopped wood all day to better the Forest Service's relationship with the small community. This was Lyle Jennings decision to stay busy while staging, and surprise some people along the way. We went above and beyond on all fire assignments, which is helping us gain a great reputation and achieve our goal to be the best.



**Six of us chopped all this wood!**



**The impressive work of a C-Faller - Lyle Jennings.  
Nez Perce Fire; Salmon, Idaho**

## **LATE SEASON**

At this point four individuals came over from the Dromedary Peak crew, which shuts down mid August. Lenin Moreno, Chris Meeker, Justin Morriss, and Cesar Ahumada, all had big shoes to fill, but pulled their weight and did well. The crew was back to full strength with twenty-one personnel.

The next work week marked a historic project for the Lone Peak Wildfire Service Center; Over one hundred firefighters were sent to the

mirror lake highway for a dead tree removal project, for thirteen miles, using the leap-frog technique, fire crews felled any tree that could possibly impact the highway if it were to fall on its own. By the end of the week, even though it was cold and snowing, the mission was accomplished!

The date was September 13, and the Twin Peaks crew stays available for fire response until October 31. The next six weeks were spent on project work in southern Utah. Each week we would drive to Kolob Reservoir, work our forty hours, and return home for a three day weekend. The project work was quite difficult, the crew was to construct a hundred foot wide fuel break through very dense timber. The slash was piled for burning, and with the lack of room and the heavy concentration of timber, some of the burn piles were immense in size. During the second week, a storm came in bringing ten inches of snow. Being at the top of a high elevation mountain, with a rugged narrow road being the only way out, spending the night was not an option. There was still one more day of work to finish the week, so we talked with our cooperator who said there was work in Beaver, Utah. Conditions in Beaver were perfect for burning piles that had been built earlier that season. With a few inches of snow on the ground, the crew burned approximately two-hundred piles. The next few weeks the weather cleared up allowing us to continue the fuel

break and finish we did. As the days got shorter, the nights got colder, yet the crew stayed strong and persevered until the end.



**Ben Parker - Kolob Canyon project, Utah**

## OVERVIEW

The Twin Peaks crew was very solid this year. The cohesive leadership provided the crew with confidence and a will to accomplish all that was asked of them. A little bit of a slow start transitioned into back to back fourteen day tours. Assignments varied in complexity, and there were numerous learning opportunities. From the calm days of long drives to the intense and exhausting work, the crew was unified in purpose and operated incredibly well with one another. None of this could be possible without support from home, and we would like to thank the families who sacrifice so much every summer to allow the crew to help those in need.

# The 2013 Twin Peaks Crew



## **Photo taken on the Thunder City Fire, Payette National Forest**

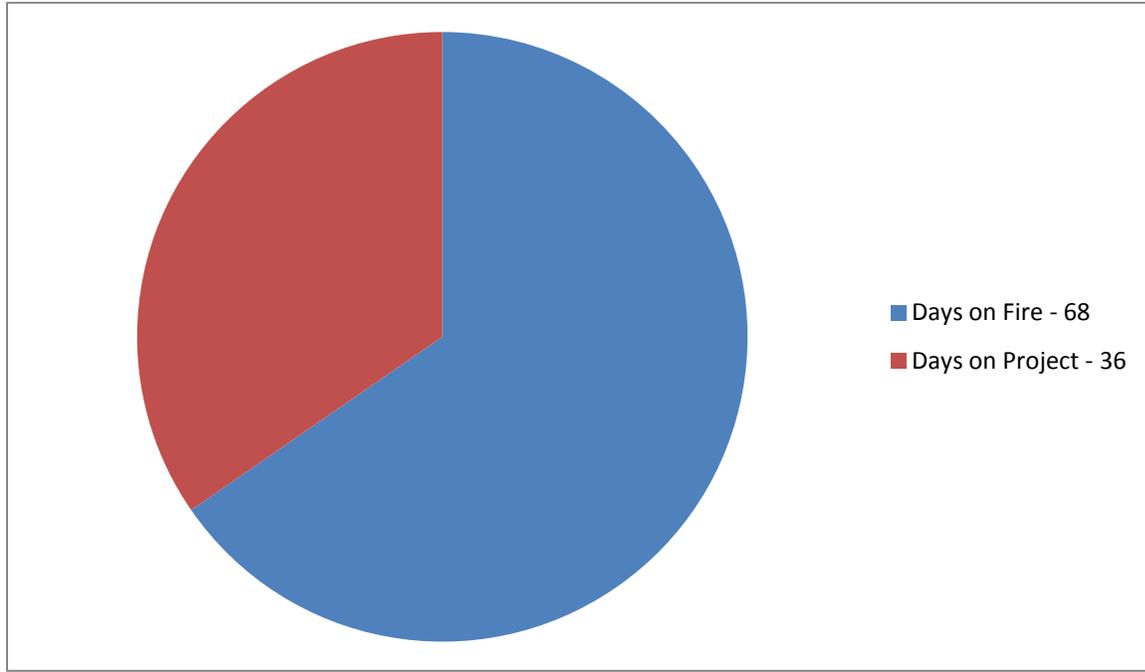
**Top Row Right to Left:** Lyle Jennings, Scott Copeland, Ryan Evans, Tyler Finn, Kevin Jimenez, Josh Berg, Rob Whitten, Ted Sneed, Dan Walton, and Austin Wilson.

**Bottom Row Right to Left:** Adam Shingleton, Dylan Demayo, Sam Barnes, Tyler Lair, Nicko Paraso, Jake Mandelko, Ben Parker, Colton Esplin, Ben Holmes, Kyle Canham, Wes Ashton.

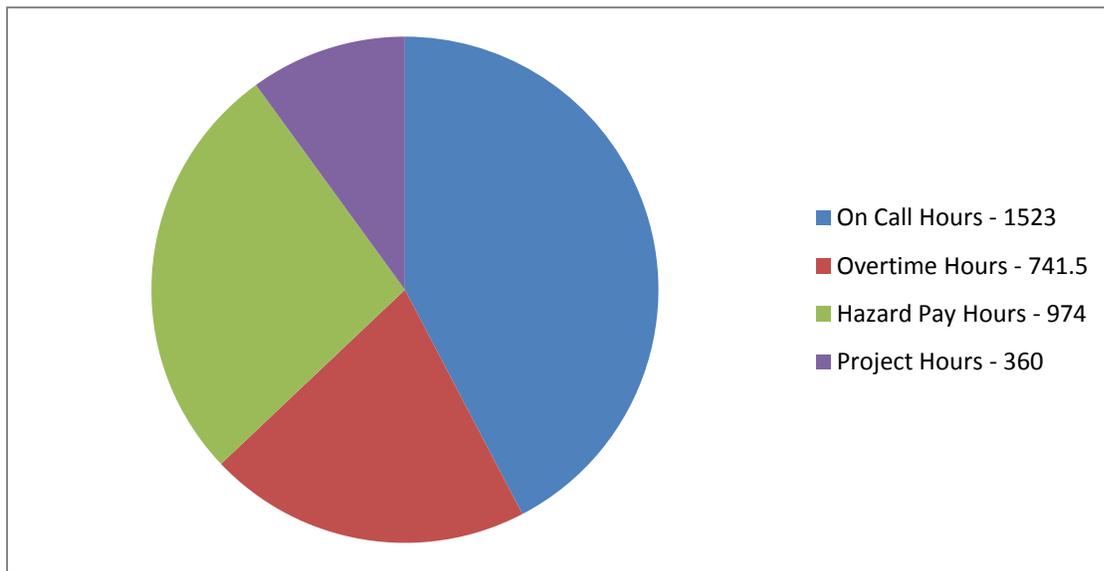


# 2013 SEASON DATA

## BREAKDOWN OF THE DAYS SPENT ON FIRE VS. PROJECT:



## BREAKDOWN OF HOURS WORKED:



## Fires by Incident Complexity

