

# PROTECTING OUR RESOURCES

Mental health and wellness after a wildfire





# AGENDA

- History of fire in the National Park Service (NPS)
- Changes in wildland fire
- Impacts to wildland firefighters
- Mitigating those impacts to firefighters
- Taking those lessons to the community
- Continuing the work

# FIRE IN THE NPS

- Suppress all fires
- Lightning caused fires allowed
- Prescribed fire use
- Rim Fire 2013





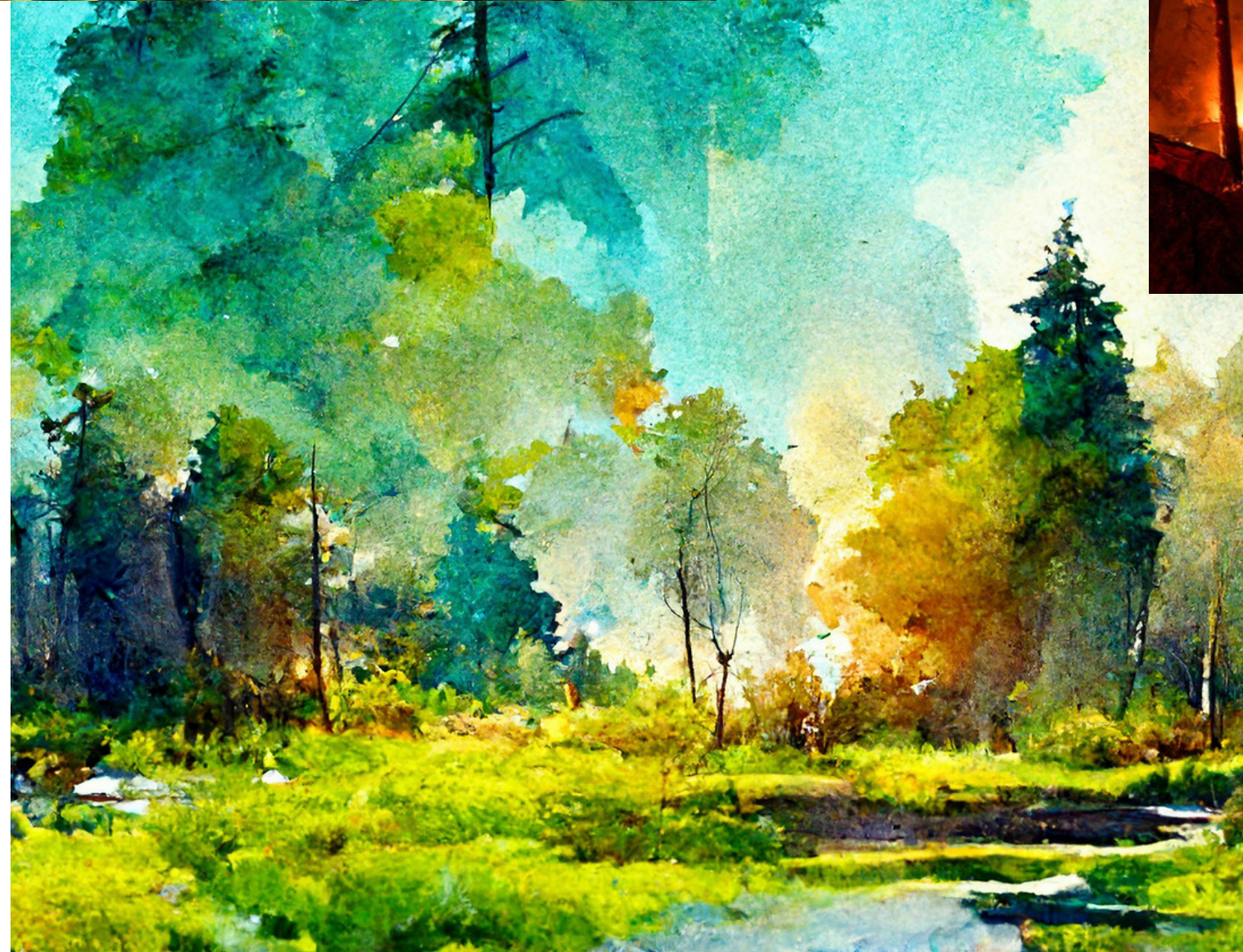




# CHANGES IN WILDFIRES ON THE LANDSCAPE



- Frequency
- Scale
- Safety risk
- Devastation



# CHANGES IN THE WILDLAND FIRE COMMUNITY

- Frequency
- Scale
- Safety risk
- Devastation



**MENTAL  
HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS  
PROGRAMS  
FOR  
FIREFIGHTERS**



# MENTAL HEALTH OF WILD AND FIREFIGHTERS

- Off-season
- 2016
- NWCG Mental Health Subcommittee
- Changes to Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)
- Pre-season programs





PRIMARY AID

Cover

Check & Coordinate

Distress or loss of function due to stress

Check & Coordinate

Calm

Check & Coordinate

CONTINUOUS AID

STRESSORS

Wellness

Connect

Check & Coordinate

Competence

Check & Coordinate

Continue to Check & Coordinate

Confidence

SECONDARY AID

## READY (Green)

### DEFINITION

- Optimal functioning
- Adaptive growth
- Wellness

### FEATURES

- At one's best
- Well trained and prepared
- In control
- Physically, mentally, and spiritually fit
- Mission focused
- Motivated
- Calm and steady
- Behaving ethically
- Having fun

## REACTING (Yellow)

### DEFINITION

- Mild and transient distress or loss of functioning
- Always goes away
- Low risk for illness

### CAUSES

- Any Stressor

### FEATURES

- Feeling irritable, anxious, or down
- Loss of motivation
- Loss of focus
- Difficulty sleeping
- Muscle tension or other physical changes
- Not having fun

## INJURED (Orange)

### DEFINITION

- More severe and persistent distress or loss of function
- Leaves a "scar"
- Higher risk for illness

### CAUSES

- Life Threat
- Loss
- Inner Conflict
- Wear and Tear

### FEATURES

- Loss of control
- Panic, rage, or depressed mood
- Substance Abuse
- Not feeling like normal self
- Excessive guilt, shame, or blame
- Diminished sense of purpose, meaning, or hope in the future

## ILL (Red)

### DEFINITION

- Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment
- Clinical mental disorder

### TYPES

- PTSD
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance Dependence

### FEATURES

- Symptoms persist and worsen over time
- Severe distress, social or occupational impairment

Unit Leader  
Responsibility

Individual, Peer, Family  
Responsibility

Caregiver  
Responsibility

# Signs and Symptoms of stress injuries



## Signs (Noted by Others)

Significant and persistent change in behavior or appearance:

- Not talking
- Isolating
- Anger outbursts
- Increased use/abuse of substances
- Making mistakes



## Symptoms (Felt by Person)

Not feeling in control of one's body, emotions or thinking:

- Numb
- Disconnected
- Short fuse
- Can't calm down or sleep
- Can't function as well at work or in relationships

# TEACHING FIREFIGHTERS

- HOW TO KEEP LIFE BALANCE
- HOW TO MANAGE YOUR WORKFORCE
- HEALTHY HABITS
- CHECKING ON EACH OTHER





# SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

- Taking the programs to our community
- Giving employees tools
- Building bridges between fire and community/staff
- Creating opportunities
- Embracing the long game

<b>Life Threat</b>	Traumatic injury is due to a disturbing event
<b>Loss</b>	Grief injury is due to the loss of loved ones, places, things or parts of oneself
<b>Inner Conflict</b>	Moral injury occurs when a person witnesses behaviors that violate their moral values
<b>Wear and Tear</b>	Fatigue injury is the accumulation of stress from all sources over time and due to insufficient rest and recovery

# HOW DO WE RECOVER?

Take our lead from Nature:

Restorative Power

Restoration

Stages of Succession

Signs of Returning Life

Time Heals





# FROM DESTRUCTION SPRINGS NEW LIFE

- Recognize the restorative power of a fire
- Fire is part of the landscape
- First rains will bring new life
- Fire opens up new areas

