

SWOSU Offers Wildland Fire Management Program

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Southwestern Oklahoma State University's Department of Parks and Recreation Management in Weatherford recently began offering two new programs in wildland fire management.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University wildland fire management program instructor Josh Williams (from left), SWOSU Parks and Recreation Management Department student Eric Pritchard of Mountain View, and Brian Bottom of Weatherford have recently been helping fight a major fire in Georgia. SWOSU's Department of Parks and Recreation Management in Weatherford recently began offering two new programs in wildland fire management.

The new firefighting programs include a minor in wildland fire management and a specialization in wildland fire management within the existing Parks and Recreation Management Department undergraduate major.

SWOSU students practice cutting fireline at Crowder Lake University Park near Weatherford. Matt Murray (from left), park law enforcement major from Frederick; Brett Johnson, parks and recreation management major from Weatherford; and Chance Paris, park law enforcement major from Fritch (TX) participate in the new programs being offered in wildland fire management. Johnson will be working this summer as a Union Hotshot for the U.S. Forest Service in Oregon, while Paris this summer will be a wildland firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service at Black Kettle National Grasslands near Cheyenne.

Upon successful completion of the 18 credit hour minor program, students will have gained 12 federal wildland firefighting certifications including S-130, S-190, I-100, L-180, S-131, S-211, S-133, I-200, S-212, S-234, L-280, and FI-110. Dr. Chad Kinder, chair of the SWOSU PRM Department, said after completion of the first two courses in the sequence, students can seek employment with any of the federal natural resource management agencies with wildland fire divisions including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service.

Kinder said 20 PRM students are currently working as wildland firefighters with the Weatherford Bureau of Indian Affairs fire unit. Others have found employment throughout the United States with agencies including the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service.

Josh Williams, adjunct faculty member with the Parks and Recreation Management Department, is the lead instructor for the wildland fire management program courses. Williams is primarily employed as a wildland fire prevention technician with the Bureau of Indian Affairs/Department of the Interior.

Williams, along with two other Weatherford BIA firefighters—Brian Bottom, a full-time firefighter for the Weatherford Fire Department, and Eric Pritchard, a PRM major from Mountain View—have recently been fighting a major wildfire in Georgia. The Sweat Farm Road/Big Turnaround fires, burning since April 16, have consumed over 107,000 acres in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge area. Currently 921 individuals are involved with the containment of this fire.

Those interested in the new wildland fire management program can contact Kinder at 580.774.3291 or chad.kinder@swosu.edu. Additional program information can be found at the department website: <http://www.swosu.edu/prm>