

Sent: Thursday, September 08, 2011 9:38 AM
To: All Headquarters Staff; All Field Staff
Subject: Bastrop Fires-Update

Dear Colleagues,

Let me begin by thanking all of you for the outpouring of concern and support you have displayed for those affected by the situation in Bastrop. Quite frankly, it is humbling. As you have demonstrated on so many occasions, the people of this agency always shine the brightest during our darkest moments. This has been no exception.

Be assured, our colleagues affected most by this incident continue to need us. As of this communication, 14 of our fellow employees have lost their homes in the wake of the devastating Bastrop fires. Others are still anxiously awaiting word on the status of their homes and still others have lost significant personal property and belongings and/or have been displaced from their homes. These are unsettling times for them all. Those whose homes we know have been lost to the fires include:

Olivia Adair-Walters (AR)
Joan Atchley- (SP)
Kelly Bender- (WL)
Tim Birdsong- (IF)
Dustin Curb- (SP)
Michael Golen- (IT)
Susan Hikel- (SP)
Brent Leisure- (SP)
Meredith Longoria- (WL)
Esther Rivas- (SP)
Cullen Sartor- (SP)
Dan Shimek- (INF)
Steve Thibodeau- (SP)
Darrell Wagner- (SP)

One can only imagine the extent of the losses, emotionally, personally, and financially, they are feeling right now. I have no doubt they will all persevere and get through this, particularly with the support we will continue to give them. There are many ways to help, and I know many of you are reaching out personally and directly to those mentioned above. Thank you for that.

Also, as a reminder, we are collecting donations of any size to aid in their immediate recovery. Checks can be made out to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, with a note that the funds are dedicated for the TPWD Employee Relief Fund. You may drop checks off to the Foundation to either Michelle Klaus or Marian Edwards at TPWD HDQS, or you may mail them directly to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation at 1901 North Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201.

Looking ahead, it is important to note that the fires around Bastrop continue to rage on. And, while significant progress has been made in combating them, we are by no means out of the woods. As of this morning, the Bastrop fires as a whole were still only 30-35% contained. Almost all of the undeveloped acreage at Bastrop State Park has been burned. Windier conditions are forecast to return today, which will undoubtedly pose additional challenges and danger for those on the front lines.

Please know, you can take great pride in the work of our state park and wildlife fire fighters, who have toiled under great personal duress and dangerous conditions to protect the park, the safety of those around them, and the historic structures on site. Their efforts, coupled with those of the agency's first responders, our park peace officers and state game wardens, and many other employees and volunteers, have been nothing short of awe inspiring.

We are a proud part of the Bastrop community, and together we will pull through these fires and recover strongly from them. Thank you for your concerns, your compassion, and your support during this time of adversity for our colleagues, the community, the Park, and the state of Texas.

Best,

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