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FIRE PROJECT

The occurrence and severity of wildland fires in the amazon region are on the rise. Every year a new record is reached in certain South American countries. This project works to strengthen international collaboration in the region, improve prevention efforts, and empower authorities to improve fire management strategies.

The Fire project focuses on improving fire prevention and response through strategic planning, coordination, and training across the region, as well as enhancing interagency and international collaboration. The project builds upon 20 years of joint work by the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to address crucial natural resource management issues in South America.

HOW DOES THE ACTIVITY WORK?

This project provides technical expertise in planning, preventing, and fighting wildfires to protect people and forest resources. The project supports government institutions and local partners to collaboratively develop national fire management policies. It also supports the development of standard firefighting courses and qualifications systems (developed by U.S. National Wildfire Coordinating Group) to promote

the sharing of professionals across borders.

In addition, Fire works with partner institutions to modernize wildland fire forecasting systems to provide decision-makers with timely information to make better on-the-ground operational decisions and plan for significant fire potential. Finally, communications and outreach activities raise fire prevention awareness to address the root causes.

RESULTS ACHIEVED TO DATE

- 765 people were trained in fire management and prevention in a Standardized Fire Qualifications and Curriculum System in Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil. Colombia, Ecuador and Peru agreed through their national firefighting organizations to standardize and synchronize their qualifications and training programs using US Wildfire training materials and methodologies.
- 16 governing documents to guide countries in interagency coordination, training and qualifications standardization, and national fire management policy have been developed in conjunction with cooperating agencies.
- The Wildland Fire Prevention Backpack, an interactive community fire prevention tool, was developed for Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, and Brazil with 103 people trained to use the methodology and 4,250 people trained with the Backpack to date, including indigenous communities in Brazil.
- FireWorks, an educational program for students aged 6 to 18 on fire science and ecology, was translated into Spanish and a virtual and in-person training has prepared 100 educators and firefighters to use the curriculum, and in Ecuador, it has been used with 81 primary and secondary school students. In Colombia, the project is supporting the Ministry of Environment to develop the “National Strategy for Social Ownership in the Prevention of Wildfires” with the goal of achieving long-term sustainability and transmitting a lasting message in fire prevention.
- Facilitated the 2022 Hotshot Exchange, bringing 23 firefighters from South America and Mexico to the US to train and work alongside US fire crews for 60 days, strengthening institutional operational capacity to suppress fires and coordinate fire management efforts.
- In Peru, an improved wildfire forecasting system is operational with a national regulation for the issuance of wildfire warnings, alerts, and alarms under development. At the local scale, forecasting services are being adapted to cultural and economic contexts of specific populations, such as in

Ollantaytambo, where, in collaboration with the District Municipality and Sacred Valley Verde, adjustments are being made to communicate wildfire danger levels in advance and prevent them. Assessments of current systems are underway in Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil that will lead to the development of similar improvements.

- The project promotes interagency coordination and standardization by sharing best practices from the North American Forestry Commission (NAFC) – Fire Management Working Group and forming interagency working groups in each country, through exchanges in the U.S., annual meetings with institutional leaders, and promoting international standardization of best practices.
- A public and private sector agreement was implemented in Brazil, collaborating to leverage private sector funds in the training and preparation of fire brigades in the Central Amazon Biosphere Reserve. This project has trained 216 people in fire suppression tactics. In total, 132 hours of training were completed, including personnel from four municipalities and 17 communities in 4 different conservation units of the territory.

PROJECT INFORMATION

IMPLEMENTER: U.S. Forest Service International Programs

DURATION: August 2020 – August 2025

USAID FUNDING: \$6 million

LOCATION: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru

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