

Improving Public Safety by Positively Changing Lives

DNR Transition Crew

Fact Sheet

October 2024



Summary

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Transitional Crew, also known as the Arcadia 20 Hand Crew, is a direct result of the passing and funding of HB1168 in 2022. The bill directed DNR and the Department of Corrections (DOC) to develop opportunities to expand existing programs to provide the additional wildfire, forest health, and silvicultural capacity necessary to implement the goals of this act, including a post-release program that helps formerly incarcerated individuals who served on state fire response crew obtain employment in wildfire suppression and forest management.

Through this collaboration, DOC and DNR created the state's first transitional wildland fire crew through the expansion of existing DOC programs to provide additional wildfire support and forest health treatment. The development of this work crew will help meet Washington's natural resource needs.

Overview

The Arcadia 20 Handcrew (ARC20) is based out of DOC's Eleanor Chase House Reentry Center in Spokane, Washington. The crew is made up of DNR employees, consisting of one Crew Superintendent, one Crew Foreman, three Crew Squad bosses, and 15 minimum custody-level incarcerated or supervised individuals. To ensure ARC20 recruits the highest qualified candidates, individuals complete a thorough recruitment process consisting of a recommendation from the DNR Assistant Camp Manager and a detailed screening and interview process before being selected to participate in the 18-month employment opportunity.

The ARC 20 crew assists with wildfire response and suppression efforts in six Eastern Washington counties, specifically Spokane, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Lincoln, Okanogan, and Ferry County. In addition to wildfire suppression, the crew aids in the treatment of forest health and land restoration in Eastern Washington. Since ARC20's conception in August 2022, approximately 900 acres of forestland have been treated. The ARC20 crew has assisted in regulatory prescribed burns of roughly 3,000 acres and responded to over 80 wildland fires. Furthermore, they have spent over 150 days on wildfire incidents, assisting Washington communities in preventing the loss of life, property, and habitats.

Forest health work completed by the Arcadia Crew, aiding in DNR's Wildfire Protection 10-year Strategic Plan and the 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan, include reducing heavy and fine wooded materials through fire fuel reduction, forest thinning, vegetation management, building potential control lines, creating strategic fuel breaks, prescribed burning, mitigation of tree insect infestation, disease control, erosion control, and post-fire recovery activities. These efforts contribute to Washington's preparedness, response, recovery, sustainability of landscapes, and resilience – in the face of wildland fires, helping our community lands resist damage and recover quickly. Communities are better prepared and adapted for current and future wildland fire regimes, making responses safer and more effective.

Transitional Employment Opportunity

Once the employment opportunity is fully implemented, additional DNR Transitional Crews would be possible at other Reentry Centers throughout the State of Washington if requested by DNR. This employment opportunity will help facilitate the career and educational development of incarcerated individuals who serve on the state's fire-response crews and is instrumental in obtaining gainful employment in wildland fire suppression and forest management post-release.

For more information:

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