
Remembering the Mann Gulch Fire 75 years later

U.S. Forest Service, partners, community remember lives lost

HELENA, Mont. – April 10, 2024 - This summer, the USDA Forest Service, Montana Discovery Foundation, National Smokejumpers Association, and other partners will recognize and honor the men who perished in the Mann Gulch Fire of 1949.

“The men who lost their lives in the Mann Gulch fire seventy-five years ago live on today in many ways – from much-improved safety for firefighters to a deeper understanding of wildfire and how our responses impact wildfire,” said Forest Supervisor Emily Platt. The memorial and events planned this summer will honor the men who lost their lives in the tragedy and reflect on our ever-evolving relationship with fire.

The Mann Gulch fire was a wildfire near Helena, Montana sparked by dry lighting. On August 5, 1949 the fire overtook 15 smokejumpers and a fire guard. Thirteen young men lost their lives, all of whom had served as part of an elite group of firefighters known as smokejumpers. Another life was lost at Mann Gulch when a U.S. Forest Service employee died while investigating the fire.

The Mann Gulch fire gave way to investments in fire research and was the main driver for funding the construction of the Northern Forest Fire Laboratory, now known as the Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory, that opened in Missoula in 1960. The Missoula Fire Science Laboratory has deepened our understanding of the importance of reducing hazardous fuels and applying prescribed fire to create more options for managers when wildfires occur and to reduce wildfire severity.

Visit: <http://www.montanadiscoveryfoundation.org/manngulch75/> to learn more about events taking place to honor the men.

Visit: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/wildfire-crisis> to learn about the strategies the agency is engaged in to confront the wildfire crisis.

The Mann Gulch 75th anniversary memorial tribute will take place in Helena on August 5, 2024. Additional events will be hosted nationwide to commemorate these men. Please visit the Montana Discovery Foundation website for details. Artist: David Goodson, artwork provided courtesy of Montana Discovery Foundation.

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