



International Association *of* Wildland Fire

Early Career Award in Fire Operations

2017 Recipient

Dr. Sara Brown, US Forest Service

Dr. Sara Brown earned a B.S. and M.S. in Environmental Science and earned a Ph.D. in 2011 in Ecology with a specialty in fire ecology. She worked in operational fire management as a smokejumper, Hot Shot and Type 2 firefighting crew member, and Helitack crew member in suppression, large scale prescribed burning, fire monitoring, and implementation of managing fires for resource benefits.

After completing her Ph.D., she served as an Assistant Professor and Student Advisor at New Mexico Highlands University, and as a Co-Principal Investigator, Southwest Fire Consortium. Her most recent position is with the US Forest Service Office of Innovation and Organizational Learning where she assists in improving understanding of how risk perceptions can be leveraged into increased margin for firefighters as they negotiate a complex work environment.

Sara is a promising young early-career professional who is demonstrating outstanding ability and dedication in wildland fire management. Her work experience, involvement, and accomplishments to date cross the entire breadth of wildland fire management, from seasonal firefighting, earning a Ph.D., serving as a teacher and researcher, conducting outreach, to working in a ground-breaking program to provide direct support to field operations. This work will improve the way organizations learn, and how learning can improve conditions for firefighters in complex wildfire adaptive systems.

She influences people, outcomes, and is changing the face of wildland fire management. Her work is setting a foundation for meaningful, and hopefully life-saving learning from successes and failures in the firefighting system.

Sara has accomplished much in her career to date. She is a leader and strong role model for women in wildland fire management. She has successfully served in an area where few women are found. She completed 87 successful jumps as a smokejumper. She received the prestigious National Smokejumper Courage Award, given by the National Smokejumper Association for her work as a smokejumper. The award is a major honor among smokejumpers, the equivalent of a purple heart, and a decoration by leaders and peers in the wildland fire management discipline.

Other notable accomplishments include:

- Assisted in the development of a wildland fire management concentration program of study at New Mexico Highlands University, including teaching (10 classes), academic and research advising (over 30 students), committee participation, and publishing relevant publications (12).
- Received academic award recognition 12 times,
- Completed a two year National Science Foundation program in pedagogy where she gained knowledge and experience in how people learn, how to facilitate learning, backward course design, and how to facilitate active learning, and
- Instructed eight federal government incident command system fire management training courses.
- Assisted in the preparation and communication for wildland fire lessons learned reviews, including the Twisp River Final Learning Review Narrative and Twisp River Operational and Organizational Learning Report.

Sara will be presented with her award at the IAWF Awards Dinner in Boise, ID in October.