



# EARLY CAREER AWARD IN FIRE OPERATIONS

## Award History

The Early Career Award in Fire Operations is to recognize a promising early-career professional who has demonstrated outstanding ability in any field of wildland fire operations. Early career is nominally taken to include professionals who are under 40 years of age when nominated.

## Award Recipients

**2017**

**Dr. Sara Brown**



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.

**2018**

**Forest Schaffer**



Forest Schaffer has extensive experience in wildfire management and fire mitigation. Since 2008, he has served as a Fire District Forester, where he developed and implemented Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) fire mitigation plans and managed grant funds for their execution. Prior to that, as a Fuel Management Specialist from 2007 to 2008, he created a prescribed fire effectiveness monitoring plan and established a Geographic Information System (GIS) database for tracking fuel management efforts. His career began as a Squad Leader and Wildland Firefighter from 2003 to 2006, where he led a hand crew in fire suppression operations and fuel reduction projects.

2019

## Kelsy Gibos



Kelsy is a distinguished fire behavior researcher and wildland fire management specialist with experience across New Zealand, Canada, and Australia. She has worked in both operational and research roles, contributing to fire behavior analysis, experimental burning, and critical incident research. With a Master's in Forestry, she played a key role in developing Victoria's Bushfire Predictive Services strategy. An advocate for knowledge sharing, she has authored numerous peer-reviewed papers and actively supports the IAWF Students of Fire initiative, earning international recognition for her contributions to fire science.

2023

## Fábio Miguel Martins da Silva



Mr. Fábio Miguel Martins da Silva is a senior firefighting expert in Portugal, holding a top command position in the national fire response structure. Since joining the Special Force for Civil Protection in 2007, he has led efforts to enhance wildfire response, including developing the FEB Monitoring GIS system. As an educator, he teaches at Nova University Lisbon and the National School of Fire Fighters. He is also a recognized expert in civil protection, contributing to national and international conferences and serving on the advisory board of the Pau Costa Foundation.

2024

## Natasha Broznitsky



Natasha Broznitsky, acting Senior Research Officer for the BC Wildfire Service, is a leader in wildfire research integration and operational coordination. She has played a key role in bridging researchers and fire management agencies, ensuring the adoption of critical findings to enhance wildfire response. An active member of CFFC's Research and Innovation Integration Committee, she contributes to national wildfire research efforts. With hands-on firefighting experience and expertise in health research, she is dedicated to improving firefighter safety and well-being for the future.

2024

# Oscar Jared Diaz Carrillo



Oscar Jared Diaz Carrillo, Head of the Experimental Forestry Areas at Universidad Autonoma Chapingo, is a dedicated fire management specialist and conservation advocate. He has led efforts to protect 470 hectares of forest and plant over 36,000 trees while advancing fire behavior analysis and prevention techniques. His work integrates academic excellence with hands-on conservation, inspiring students and collaborating with organizations globally. Recognized for his contributions, he received first place at the Fire Management Forum 2022 and continues to develop innovative fire management strategies in protected areas.