

Staff Ride

Resources



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

Mann Gulch Fire – Facilitator’s Field Guide

Note to Facilitators: This is a suggested format. Do not feel limited by the identified stands or discussion items. It is provided as a word document so that users may adapt and revise it to fit their specific audience and time demands.

Staff Ride Difficulty Rating

Physical

Arduous – Walking segments include trail and non-trail portions. Non-trail portions are steep, very rocky (bowling ball size rocks), and include a fair amount of side hill walking. Elevation ranges from 3550 ft. at the mouth of Mann Gulch to 4800 ft. at the top of the ridge between Mann Gulch and Rescue Gulch. From the mouth of Mann Gulch to the last Stand is approximately 2 miles one way.

Logistics

Moderate-Difficult – Adjacent to Interstate 15, north of Helena, Montana. Helena has a good amount of overnight accommodations. Because of the time involved to do the staff ride Helena is a good place to start and end the day. Snow and weather allows access from around mid-April to the end of October. Access to the site is typically by boat on the Missouri River arranged through Gates of the Mountains, Inc., <http://www.gatesofthemountains.com/>. Gates of the Mountains runs boats daily in June, July, and August, but those tours do not generally stop at the mouth of Mann Gulch, so advance arrangements must be made. Gates of the Mountains, Inc. runs boats on a more limited schedule in September. Special arrangements can be made outside of those months. Mann Gulch can also be accessed from Willow Creek starting off on trail #260 or the boat ramp at Meriwether Gulch. Both of these access points require additional time to access Mann Gulch and would require significant planning on how to conduct the staff ride. Plans to access through Willow Creek Trail should be coordinated with Helena USFS. This route is not always assured available.

Hazards

Consider and plan for your needs for medical support in this remote location.

Possible Hazards and Risks	Mitigations
Rocky and difficult terrain and footing	Use caution and wear appropriate footwear
Exposure to sun and possible high temperatures	Use sunblock , wear a hat, suitable clothing Sunglasses, drinking water
Possible rain, snow, low temperatures	Suitable clothing
Transportation and work in and around moving vehicles	Exercise caution, drive defensively
Rattlesnakes	Watch footing and avoid reaching under rocks and brush
Ticks (mostly April – June)	Check your entire body for ticks as soon as you can after the staff ride
Overhead hazards	Wear hardhats and visually assess tree hazards; watch for hikers above, yell to alert if you kick rocks loose
Transportation by boat shuttle to Mann Gulch	Wear personal flotation device and follow instructions from boat crew
Poor radio and cell phone communications	You have to be on the ridge top to reach repeaters and get cell service

Those of you who have lead or participated in Staff Rides before know what a great learning experience lays ahead, and we encourage all of you – veterans and newcomers alike—to prepare by opening your minds and allowing yourselves as much as possible to put your feet in the boots of the Mann Gulch Fire fighters and managers on August 5, 1949. This letter will provide you some information for better understanding how we have organized the following Facilitator Instruction Material, and also include some of our own lessons learned for making this Mann Gulch Staff Ride work well.

We have attempted to provide support and flexibility in the materials provided here. By all means, make it your own. You should find a great deal of support in the Facilitators Support and Maps Tabs of the Mann Gulch Staff Ride Website. We have included several photos that might benefit participants at each Stand. We recommend printing and laminating Tactical Decision Games (TDG) plans and supporting documents, photos and maps to include in a notebook with your Facilitator Instructional Materials. If you are planning your Staff Ride for a large group of people, we have found the Incident Command System to be a helpful organizing tool. The sample Incident Action Plan found in the Facilitator Support tab may be a helpful tool as well. If using the Incident Action Plan (IAP), please remember to update/validate that the important information is current.

Make sure you review the Wildland Fire Staff Ride Guide and remember that it is only a Staff Ride if it has these three elements: Preliminary Study, Field Study, and Integration. We also suggest that during your Field Study portion you include these three components at each Stand:

- 1) Orient the Ground: Point out the terrain features important to the historical events at that Stand. Make sure to explain what would have looked different during the historical event than it does now.
- 2) Present the Background Information: What was planned, what really happened and any other issues significant to your objectives. One way to have participants themselves present some of this information is to have them do the Person of Interest (POI) assignment described below. (See POI sample letter in Facilitator Support tab).
- 3) Analyze: What can we learn from this historical event to make ourselves better firefighters and managers today? This analysis can be achieved through TDG, through pre-planned Discussion Questions, or simply by letting the group talk about what they are learning after each Stand.

Part of our instructions includes a POI assignment for participants to prepare for while doing their Preliminary Study. We assign each participant a POI who seems like someone they might relate to. For instance, we might ask a current Ranger or FMO participant to study Ranger Jansson; a crew leader to focus on Dodge or Hellman; or a crew member to learn about one of the Mann Gulch smokejumpers—maybe someone who grew up in the same part of the country, is the same age, or has something else in common with them.

We ask participants to learn everything they can about who that person was and what his life was like. Lots of these details can be found under the Information Sources tab on the website. Personal profiles were compiled for Mann Gulch participants in a document developed by Helena High School students—High School X-CEL Class Mann Gulch Remembered, 50th Anniversary. This PDF document can be found as well under the Information Sources tab on the Mann Gulch Staff Ride website.

After studying the assigned POI, Staff Ride participants are asked to come prepared to tell that person's story, as best they can, to their Staff Ride group while we stand on the terrain where the historic fire occurred. This assignment has helped to make the Mann Gulch Staff Ride a personal enough experience for our participants that the lessons learned stay with them as they make their own fireline decisions.

As you and your students study the Preliminary materials, you will notice that the survivors' testimonies and Mann Gulch's various authors sometimes contradict each other. It is not the goal of a Staff Ride to present a "united front," or any kind of a "party line." The interesting complexities and truths lie somewhere among all the story lines. We have striven to be as accurate as possible in our Staff Ride materials, but there are some things that we can never know for sure. As a facilitator, be careful not to let the group get too sidetracked in trying to figure out those unknowns; keep in mind that you are trying to help folks get better at fighting their next fire, not re-fighting the old one.

One technique that will help your participants better understand what happened at Mann Gulch on August 5, 1949 is to not allow yourself as facilitators, or your Staff Ride participants, to mention anything that happened ahead of the unfolding narrative at each Stand. Design your Staff Ride to move like a story, complete with the tension of not knowing what lies around the

next corner. If they did their pre-reading they will know many things already about the outcome, but ask them to suspend that knowledge until the Integration.

You may also have to cut discussions off at each Stand simply because at the end of the day you will have to catch a boat out of Mann Gulch at a certain time. So, make sure as you plan that you divide the time among the stands in a thoughtful way. In our experience Stand 1 is long on Background Information as it's important to do a good job of setting the stage, and then the amount of time you spend at each following Stand can decrease, just as the number of options remaining to the historic firefighters decreased as the day wore on. Stands 5 and 6 will probably need to be longer again, as they address the whole rescue operation and the aftermath of the Mann Gulch Fire.

If you are managing several groups at once, you may find it necessary logistically, to provide fill-in material for occasions when one group has to wait for another to clear an area before you can move to the next Stand. POI stories can help make this time productive.

It is your job as facilitators to keep track of your Staff Ride objectives, keep participants moving both physically and mentally, and don't let the same one or two individuals monopolize the conversations. Otherwise, let those discussions percolate how they will, and don't try to draw participants toward any grand conclusions or consensus; we want people's minds to be clicking and/or spinning, and we are not troubled if they have more questions at the end of the day than they did at the beginning.

There needs to be space for disagreement and a whole range of emotion (anger, sadness, etc.). We want participants to frankly discuss where possible mistakes were made, but to remain respectful of the human beings who may have made those mistakes. Suspension of disbelief is important, and we need to remember that they did the best they could with the information and awareness they had that day. If we can get the participants to keep their minds open, and take the events of August 5, 1949 one hour and minute at a time, you might be surprised by how many of their decisions seem rational to you, given what those firefighters knew at the time.

It is good for participants to get a little sweaty and winded as they traverse this historic route; we all tend to think sharper with a bit of exertion. But don't let them get moving so fast that they get injured. The terrain is rough and the goal is not to re-run the same race that Sallee and Rumsey did.

Remember, we will be walking on ground where people died and that many consider sacred. It is also a governed as Wilderness Area and appropriate considerations should be taken as such. Please refrain from removing artifacts or damaging natural areas. Photographs should be taken in a professional manner and kept to a reasonable number. Please be sensitive in words and action to the people and places that are included in the Staff Ride, and come prepared to engage honestly in discussions designed for us to continue learning to do our jobs better, and to keep our people alive on future fire grounds.

Summary of Common Considerations and Helpful Recommendations

Develop a working copy of the support materials, including this Facilitators Guide. From the Mann Gulch Staff Ride website, print out and become familiar with the materials found in the Facilitators Support and the Map tabs. (A three ring binder works well for this). Often referenced in the staff ride will be the following important support materials:

- Facilitators Reference Guide
- Maps
- Supporting Stand Photos
- IAP, JHA, Medical and Communications Plans (critical to update)
- Travel Directions
- Tactical Decision Games (TDGs)
- POI Assignments

Consider the time you have to conduct the staff ride, your audience, and which elements will deserve the most attention for the desired impact. Stand 1 provides the foundation, and the TDG's, the POI stories, Stands 5 and 6 can be very powerful. Time allowed to visit the markers, following Stand 5 should be provided, as it is frequently the most important element that participants site as connecting the material with the costs. If time is short, consider combining Stands 5 and 6 at the Ridge top.

Rehearse around a sand table or terrain model with your facilitative team. Prior to the staff ride, practice the sequence of events, shoot holes in your delivery and look for areas where confusion is likely, or where things may go wrong.

Read, adjust and practice the TDG's and understand where the POI assignments fit into the procedures.

Coordinate with critical supporting partners, such as the Helena NF staff and/or the Gates of the Mountains Resort personnel. Depending on the formal nature of the staff ride, and if possible, visit the site with the facilitative team prior to conducting the staff ride.

Finally, solicit feedback from folks that have presented this staff ride before, and seek lessons learned. Make it your own, but feel free to contact personnel from the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program for further information, or to assist with any questions you may have, or to find further contacts.

Stand 1 – Background & Overview

Stand 1 gives an overview of firefighting culture, smokejumping, fuels and weather in August of 1949. This discussion can be held at the Gates of the Mountains boat ramp, but is better done at the mouth of Mann Gulch after jumping off the boat. The clearing near the mouth of Mann Gulch also offers a good place to logistically rally and to place medical equipment (trauma kit) if you have it. The facilitator(s) would do well to consider which location will facilitate the timing of their staff ride.

Support Material

Collection of Stand Support Photos – Stand 1

Maps

TDG #1 handouts for each participant (Handed out following Stand 1 discussion, prior to Stand 2)

GPS Coordinates: N 46°52.716' W 111°54.797'

Travel Directions

The Gates of the Mountains boat launch is approximately 40 minutes from Helena – north on Interstate 15 about 17 miles, take exit 209 for Gates of the Mountains.

Turn right at the bottom of the off-ramp for Gates of the Mountains Rd., travel 2.7 miles to Gates of the Mountains Marina.

The boat ride is about 15 minutes downriver. From where you get off the boat, hike up canyon along an unimproved trail about 100 yards to an opening large enough to hold the group. Stand 1 can be delivered here, if it wasn't done earlier – preferred.

Terrain Orientation

Continental Divide

Missouri River

Gates of the Mountains Wild Area

If at the mouth of Mann Gulch:

Mann Gulch

Meriwether Canyon

Rescue Gulch

Background Information

- 10 AM policy – Established by the Forest Service in 1936, this policy stipulated that a fire was to be contained and controlled by 10 AM on the day following the report of a fire, or, failing that goal, controlled by 10 AM the next day, and so on. Often large numbers of resources were immediately mobilized to achieve this goal. Having fires that remained out of control for an extended period of time could reflect poorly on a District Ranger or

could even result in a Ranger being fired. A prerequisite to becoming a District Ranger at the time was to have been previously a Fire Control Officer (FCO). (Note: The FCO position evolved into the present day FMO position.)

- Fire culture – The culture of firefighters at the time stressed unquestioning compliance with superior's orders; it was "shut up and get to work". A good number of the firefighters were veterans of WWII and brought much in the way of attitudes and culture from their military experience.
- Values-at-Risk – Gates of the Mountains area had just been declared a "Wild Area" the year before. Even with that declaration wildland fire use or less than a full suppression strategy was not an option at the time. Meriwether campground was a very popular destination for recreationists at that time with as many as 6000 people visiting per year.
- Smokejumper program/culture – At 10 years old the smokejumpers were regarded as a valuable firefighting resource in this era of the 10 AM Policy; however, the program was still considered somewhat experimental. Smokejumpers often were the best resource to staff and gain control of fires in remote areas because they could do so more quickly than others. They were also valued because they were capable, fit, and self-sufficient. Even though the smokejumpers were valued, they generally had much less fire experience than they do now. Most spent a year or two jumping and then went on to other jobs.
- Training – In 1949 10/18/LCES did not exist – Firefighters knew that the tail of a fire was a safer location than the head. They also were taught to work close to fire and get into the black if threatened. Safety training for blow-up fire situations was minimal at this time. If endangered by a running fire, smokejumper trainers suggested getting to a ridge or break in fuels and topography, moving along the flank of the fire to safety, or trying to cut through the fire front into a burned area. Finally, and most emphatically, "new man training" for rookie jumpers stressed following the orders of the foreman in charge.
- Smokejumpers on board – Nine of the smokejumpers on the airplane headed for Mann Gulch were rookies. For most it was their first fire jump. Four were second season jumpers. Most of the rookies had worked for the Forest Service for only two previous seasons, but not always in primary firefighting jobs. Twelve of the men were veterans from the armed services.
- Foreman Wagner "Wag" Dodge – Wag Dodge had been a smokejumper for eight seasons with one previous season working for the Forest Service. He was a quiet individual, not very communicative or expressive, but very handy. When not fighting fire he was most often working around the smokejumper base keeping the facilities and equipment repaired and maintained. None of the rookies had met Wag before.
- Squad Boss William "Bill" Hellman – Bill had been a smokejumper for four seasons with one previous season working for the Forest Service. He was a sociable individual and was very involved with rookie training.
- Seasonal Weather – The 1948 season was cool, wet and had very few fires. 1949 was relatively wet in the late winter and early spring, and then turned to a dry late spring and early summer. The wet early period had resulted in abundant grass growth, which had cured in the hot, dry weather.
- Smokejumper interaction – During rookie training rookies were split into 4-man squads and they really only grew to know the other rookies in their squad and their squadleader. Because the fire danger was low in the early season the smokejumper rookies were sent to outlying districts in pairs or as individuals after completing training. This meant that

there was little interaction after training with other rookies or the experienced smokejumpers at the base.

- Ignition - On August 4, a lightning storm moved through western Montana and on to the east side of the continental divide, starting numerous fires. The Missoula Smokejumper Base began jumping those fires the afternoon of August 4, and was nearly jumped out by mid-day on the August 5. The base did manage to cobble together a load to fill the request to the Helena National Forest however. One individual, Eldon Diettert, was celebrating his 19th birthday that day and was called away from his birthday lunch at home with his family.
- District Ranger Robert Jansson was flying detection on the Helena National Forest and ordering resources to fight the fires he and the lookouts were discovering. Of the fires detected on his district he was most concerned about the York Fire which was threatening ranch homes, livestock, about 10 million board feet of timber, and the tremendous scenic and recreation values in Trout Creek Canyon. He was the most experienced person in fire on the forest.
- Meriwether Guard Harrison had been a smokejumper the previous season, and then took this guard job because his mother thought that smokejumping was too dangerous. He had already been working the fire and had taken a couple trips over the steep Meriwether ridge before the smokejumpers arrived.
- Previous to the Mann Gulch Fire there had been no smokejumpers killed by fire. Between 1939 and 1949 35 people had been killed in fast moving grass fires east of the divide.
- The smokejumpers were largely unfamiliar with large fires and with fire behavior east of the divide.

Facilitator Suggestions

POI is optional at this Stand. If done the POI could be District Ranger Robert Jansson (if not doing Stand 6), Meriwether Guard Harrison, Smokejumper Spotter Earl Cooley, any of the rookie smokejumpers excluding Sallee and Rumsey (who are better saved for the end).

Stand 2 – Briefing Overlook

Support Material

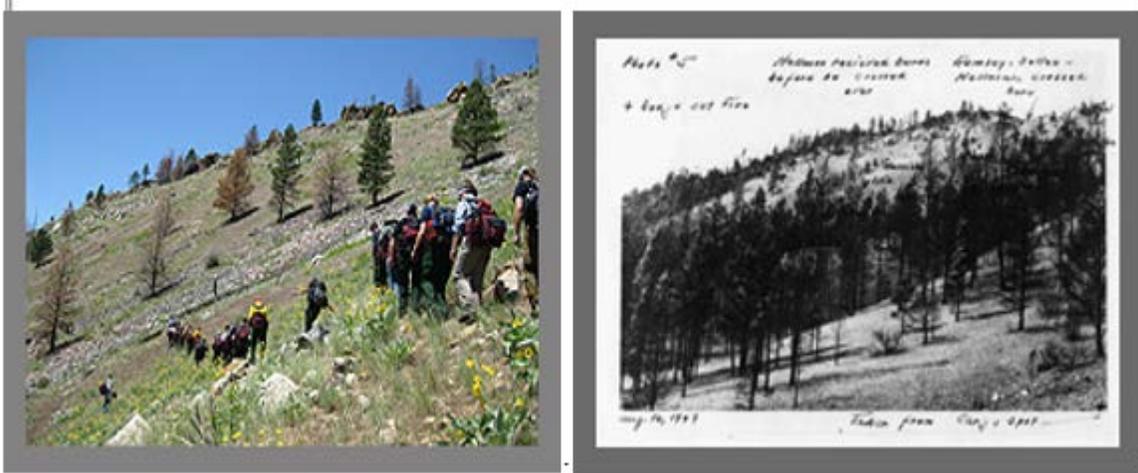
Collection of Stand Support Photos – Stand 2

TDG #1 handout

Incident Response Pocket Guide

TDG #2

Photo of spot fire below, cutting access to river



Travel Directions

GPS Coordinates: N 46°53.149' W 111°53.703'

From the mouth of Mann Gulch hike about one mile up canyon on the trail. Along the way, you pass Stand 1A/5A – Jansson's Turnaround Spot (optional Stand located near Gisborne's memorial plaque). Follow the trail to the next memorial markers, as it leaves the drainage bottom to the left (north). Stand 2 takes place on an open grass bench around the top of the lower third of the slope (south aspect).

Terrain Orientation

Note: This Stand is not located at a historically important location; rather it is a good vantage point to see a number of important spots.

- General orientation of Mann Gulch (Note the orientation of the canyon: alignment with prevailing winds, the effect of solar heating on different aspects as the day progresses, box canyon effect)
- The Jump Spot (up canyon, on a flatter area below ridge)
- Cargo Spot (nearer to drainage and Stand 1 than to Jump Spot)
- The Fire Location (across drainage to the south, on top of the ridge dividing Mann Gulch and Meriwether Canyon)

- The location where Dodge and Harrison rejoined the crew (across the drainage, approximately 100 yards up the slope)

Stand 2 – Background Information

- The vegetation of Mann gulch has changed significantly between 1949 and now, mostly as the result of the fires of 1949 and 2007. The relative locations of timber and grass during the 1949 fire must be considered to properly understand the actions of the firefighters that day. There was significantly more timber along the south aspect in 1949 than is visible now, arranged in thick stringers. These fuels are shown well in the historical photos in the gallery. The grass in the gulch was affected by a wet season in 1948 and early 1949, and possibly by the recent designation as a wild area with limited grazing.
- The jump ship arrived over the fire around 3:10 PM. While in the aircraft the Spotter and Foreman conducted a recon of the fire. At this point it was judged to be about 60 acres. It had burned to the top of the ridge between Mann and Meriwether Gulches, with considerable backing down slope into Mann Gulch. The winds were northeast, carrying the fire along the ridge top. From his airplane vantage point, Spotter Earl Cooley stated that they assessed the fire as “not appearing dangerous . . . confined with no indications of spotting or crowning;” and that it’s “rate of spread would reduce throughout the evening” (Dodge); and “would be mostly mop-up work” (Rumsey).
- They picked a jump spot across the gulch ½ mile away up canyon and 500 feet lower in elevation than the fire. Wind streamers indicated the wind was about 10 mph straight up canyon. The air had been turbulent all the way from Missoula and continued to be during smokejumping operations, causing several jumpers to become airsick. The turbulence made for hard landings for some of the jumpers. Dodge was banged up and needed minor medical attention at the jump spot. The cargo landed scattered. The parachute on the crew’s radio failed to deploy and the radio was destroyed. The jump and cargo operations were completed by 4:10 PM, and the airplane returned to Missoula.
- This was the first fire jump for several of the smokejumpers. As with today’s rookies, they may have been more focused on their first operational jump than on the fire’s behavior.
- Around 5:00 PM, after gathering the cargo, Dodge went across the gulch for a meeting with Harrison, who had yelled down to the crew. Dodge instructed Hellman to follow him with the crew after they had gotten a quick bite to eat. They were to bring food, water, and tools. Dodge and Harrison met at a point near the head of the fire, upslope from the drainage bottom on the south side of the gulch. The fuels on this north aspect between the men and the fire were dense with timber reproduction.
- When Hellman brought the crew across to join them, Dodge and Harrison came down and met the crew at a point about 100 yards up from the bottom. Dodge assessed the situation on this flank near the head as unsafe. Around 5:20 PM he instructed Hellman to take the crew back north across the drainage to this Stand’s location, and then to go down the gulch toward the Missouri River on the north side of the canyon. Dodge and Harrison continued back to the cargo spot to get food and water.
- Ranger Jansson estimated the winds down at the mouth of Mann Gulch to be between 20 and 30 mph around 5:00 PM.

Facilitator Suggestions

Take with you selected photos from the Mann Gulch Facilitators Stand Support Photos – Stand 2, to assist in representing historical fuel conditions and fire behavior.

Suggested Persons of Interest: James Harrison, and perhaps one of the smokejumper rookies.

TDG #1: You handed this out for review following Stand 1, en-route to this Stand.

PERFORM TDG #1: After participants have taken their two minutes to write some notes and think, ask a few of them to brief the assembled Staff Ride group as if they were a fire crew. You might have a participant with less fire experience go first, and then have someone with more experience try it. Then take some time to analyze what constitutes an effective briefing.

Make sure, prior to completing elements here at Stand 2 Location, and moving toward Stand 3, that you understand how TDG #2 will work... Particularly with POI's Hellman, Harrison and Dodge. (See Facilitators Suggestions following Strategic Discussion Points.)

Note to Facilitator: After completing TDG #1, the facilitator should set the tone for TDG #2 (Next Page) and the group's transition to Stand 3. We suggest asking participants to suspend their knowledge of how the day's events unfold and to concentrate on searching their hearts and minds for everything they have been able to uncover about the POI that they were assigned for the Staff Ride. Urge them to consider the kinds of things that their particular POI may have been thinking or doing at this point, and as the group moves across the slope, to imagine as best they can that they are walking in the boots of the person they have studied.

Be creative here and adjust as necessary to include such options as having select individual's role play to simulate certain challenges or situations that help illuminate your Staff Ride objectives.

Stand 3 – Crew Turnaround Point

If doing Tactical Decision Game #2, Part C, it is linked closely with Stand 3. It will be important to understand the sequence of events BEFORE facilitating this part of the staff ride.

Support Material

Collection of Stand Support Photos – Stand 3

TDG #2 Photo – Spot fire below, cutting off access to the river

Maps

GPS Coordinates: N 46°52.983' W 111°54.142'

From Stand 2 hike a half mile southwest, contouring along, slightly up the slope. Stand 3 takes place about mid-slope on a small spur ridge.

Terrain Orientation

Main Fire (south across drainage, top of ridge dividing Mann Gulch and Meriwether Canyon)

Spot Fire (north side of drainage, and below and slightly down canyon of crew)

Steepness of slope up to ridge, north side of the canyon



Suggested POI: William “Bill” Hellman

Background Information

- Remember, the historical fuels discussion from Stand 2. In 1949 this slope had quite a few stringers of fairly dense timber, with generally continuous timber along the lower third of the canyon. See Stand Support Photos
- Fire activity across the canyon at the top of the ridge had picked up considerably.
- When hiking down canyon from the briefing point the crew had become split up into two or more smaller groups, causing some confusion and shouting.
- While at the cargo spot Dodge and Harrison saw the fire “boil up,” and determined to get the crew out of the canyon as soon as possible. They quickly moved down canyon, and tied back in with the crew around 5:40 PM. At this point Dodge appeared “worried about

the fire and our safety” (Sallee). He went to the head of the crew and tried to hurry them down to the river.

- Within five minutes of taking the lead, Dodge saw there was fire on their side of the gulch and was coming up the slope toward the crew. For some at the rear of the crew, this turnaround was the first indication that the fire might endanger them. Flames were still not visible from the rear, but the smoke and noise had become significant.
- Even after turning around and heading away from the potential threat below, the fire blowing up across the canyon still drew some of the firefighters’ attention away from the immediate situation. At this point Navon and another jumper were taking pictures of the main fire.

Stand 3A – Tool Drop

Support Material

Collection of Support Photos – Stand 3A

Maps

Mann Gulch: A Race That Couldn't Be Won, by Richard Rothermel – Can be accessed on the Mann Gulch Staff Ride website – Information Sources tab

Travel Directions

GPS Coordinates: N 46°53.097' W 111°54.013'

From Stand 3, cut back to the northeast approximately 500 yards heading toward the ridge line. Stand 3A takes place on a slight bench on the upper third of the slope (south aspect).

Terrain Orientation

Steep ridge and occasional visible rock outcrops to the north of the escape path.

Rock slides between Stands 3 and 3A.

Location of fire behind and below crew.

Background Information

- Remember the vegetation difference between 1949 and now, especially the relative locations of timber and grass. Notice in the historical photo of the Tool Drop site that there are dense stands of Ponderosa pine to the north and east, which the firefighters still had to escape through. The timber did become thinner as they traveled further upslope and up canyon.
- This is the point at which Rumsey recalled Dodge saying something about “getting out of this firetrap.” At about 5:53 PM Dodge ordered the men to drop their packs to speed their escape.
- The fire was about 100 yards behind the crew, and seemed to be getting ahead of them both above and below on the slope. The fire is estimated to have been spreading at just less than 100 yards per minute.
- As the timber thinned, the fuels became flashier, and the winds pushed the fire to spread even faster, up to an estimated 600 feet per minute. (see Rothermel's Mann Gulch: A Race That Couldn't Be Won)

Facilitator Suggestions

Pay attention to the safety of your group on this steep terrain. Reference the Risk Analysis.

This may be a Stand that can provide an opportunity to move along a little more if little discussion is generated. Stand 4 will involve some action and discussion, and Stands 5 and 6 may have more in depth discussion.

Stand 4 – Dodge’s Escape Fire

Support Material

Collection of Stand Support Photos – Stand 4

Maps

Photo of fire front, similar to what may have been closing in behind crew – Facilitator Support Tab

Travel Directions

GPS Coordinates: N 46*53.204 W 111*532.921

From Stand 3 hike approximately 0.4 miles to the northeast gaining approximately 400 feet in elevation. The hike is across open terrain with poor footing. No developed trail system is currently in place. Participants will cross a couple rock slide areas before reaching Stand 4.

Terrain Orientation

Approximate Escape Fire Location – Wooden Marker Note: May be difficult to find
North side of Mann Gulch



Background Information

- Dodge’s elbow and side were banged up some from his hard jump landing. Remember that, other than Harrison, Dodge had done the most traversing up and down Mann Gulch to this point.
- Dodge was 33 years old. At the time of Mann Gulch he had nine seasons of general Forest Service work with eight of those was as a smoke jumper.

- This is the area where Wag Dodge lit his escape fire at approximately 5:55 PM with a book of paper gopher matches. The term “gopher” refers to book matches: as soon as you light one, then it’s time to go-fer another one because they go out so easy.
- When Dodge lit the escape fire no fewer than eight members of the crew were close to him. Dodge thought he tried to explain to the crew what he was doing and why he wanted them to follow him into the black. Dodge intended to wait a few seconds to let his fire burn down before entering it. About 100 square feet had burned when a crewmember said: “To hell with this, I am getting out of here,” and everyone except Dodge continued up the Gulch. Dodge kept trying to convince the others as they passed him to get into the ashes with him, but no crew members followed him. This sequence took seconds to occur.
- The rookie smokejumpers had gone through weeks of intensive conditioning during training, and had been working in the field ever since. They reached speeds estimated at 4 to 6 mph on these steep slopes, an incredible effort.

Facilitator Suggestions

Suggested POI: R. Wagner “Wag” Dodge, Smokejumper Foreman

Share Sample Photo: fire front, similar to what may have been closing in behind crew – Facilitator Support tab, and discuss what it may have been like to look back and see a fire front similar to this one approaching... knowing you’re running out of time.

CRITICAL: following the discussions that take place here regarding the escape fire... it may be desirable to allow participants to make their own way to the ridge top for Stand 5, in whichever way they see fit. They will know the outcome, but may desire to know how it felt to attempt escape under the real terrain. **PROVIDE A TIME TO MEET AT RIDGE TOP.** And cut them loose.

Stand 5 – Ridge Top & Rescue

Note to Facilitator: If, for time's sake, you are combining Stands 5 and 6 into the ridge top location, see also support materials for Stand 6

Support Material

Collection of Stand Support Photos – Stand 5

TDG #3

TDG #4

Letter from Jansson to Harrison Family – Facilitator Support tab

Travel Directions

GPS Coordinates: N 46°53.256' W111°53.937'

From Stand 4 either walk as a group—nearly straight up to the rimrock ledge, and pass through the rimrock crevice where Sallee and Rumsey did to the ridgetop, or, if it fits your objectives—give people some time to go by whatever route and speed they want to (mimicking how the smokejumpers got scattered), and meet at the top. Stand 5 is at the ridge top separating Mann Gulch from Rescue Gulch, where there is a flat area large enough to for a group to sit or stand.

Terrain Orientation

Escape Route of Rumsey and Sallee

Space in the rimrock that Rumsey and Sallee passed through to safety.

Rockslide where Rumsey and Sallee hunkered to survive the fire on backside of ridge.

Hellman's Rockslide

Rescue Gulch

Firefighter Monument Locations



Background Information

- Jumpers Sallee, Rumsey and Diettert hurried up the east edge of Dodge's escape fire—focused on getting to the rocks they could see on the ridgetop. Dodge's fire was now putting up two to three foot high flames and moving quickly upwards. At that time Sallee thought perhaps Dodge meant them to use his fire as a kind of a buffer to help them make it to the top. They came to the rocks they had seen, only to discover that it was a rimrock cliff, and not the true ridge top. After a frantic search Sallee and Rumsey found a crevice to squeeze through. Diettert had been just behind them until the rimrock, where he turned east and continued below the ledge.
- While Sallee waited for Rumsey to climb through he glanced back downhill to see Dodge jump over the burning edge of his fire and saw him shouting and waving his arms for the remaining men to join him. Only then did Sallee realize that Dodge had intended for them to get inside his fire area to ride out the main fire. He assumed that the rest of the crew would do just that, and be okay.
- The main fire took about five minutes to pass over Dodge there in his escape fire and when he sat back up his watch read 6:10.
- Rumsey and Sallee ran sidehill into a rockslide on the backside of the ridge where they were able to survive when the main fire made runs around them.
- After the blow-up had subsided Rumsey and Sallee found Hellman, badly burned, but alive. He had never been with them, so he must have come to the top of the ridge by a different route. They laid him on a rock to keep his burned skin out of the ashes.
- Wag Dodge joined Rumsey and Sallee and reported he had found Sylvia alive, but badly burned, and had moved him under the shelter of a big rock.
- Dodge and Sallee proceeded to look around for other survivors, but found no one else. Finally, they headed down Rescue Gulch to the Missouri River to find help while Rumsey stayed with Hellman.
- A rescue crew arrived on the scene at 12:30 AM on August 6. At 1:30 AM, the rescue crew found Sylvia and Hellman. The two injured men were evacuated at 5:00 AM, but both died in a Helena hospital later in the morning. Before the day was over all the bodies of those who died were found within 300 yards of each other.
- This rescue effort was among the first uses of a helicopter in Region One. Dodge knew something about the capability of the "egg beater," and ordered it with the necessary supplies to come help. He and a doctor were transported to the ridgetop that way.
- During the blow-up stage, the Mann Gulch Fire covered an estimated 3,000 acres in 10 minutes and eventually burned 43,000 acres. 611 firefighters helped bring the fire under control.

Facilitator Suggestions

- Suggested POI: Robert Sallee or Walter Rumsey
- Time management will have really paid off here if done well. You should be aware that there are two separate TDG's (TDG's #3 and #4) that can be performed simultaneously. See additional Facilitator Suggestions below for details.
- If possible, following TDG's, allow enough time for participants to take the time to visit markers (particularly for their POI) en-route to Stand 6.

- Optional Tactical Decision Game #3 (recommended for crew level participants) or #4 (recommended for fire managers) is to be done here at Stand 5, when you are ready to do it, and not before. Read the scenario out loud to the group; then give them the two minutes to write some notes about what they think and want to do. The goal in both these TDG's is for participants to have to wrestle with some of the tension associated with a rescue mission involving possible or sure fatalities; where strong, moral leadership is needed, and there are no easy answers.
- For Optional TDG #3—recommended for crew level participants. Ask somebody to play the part of the Squad Leader. Have them respond to the IC over the radio. At this point you, the facilitator, can play the part of the IC on the other end of the radio. It turns out that the governor is standing right next to the IC at the Helena High School Command Post, increasing the pressure that the IC already feels about this. If the Squad Leader demands that the bodies are left as they lay for a good investigation to be done, or for any other reason, the IC can repeat how important it is to the governor that they be brought down. But if the Squad Leader persists, and especially if he/she has a good argument, then both the IC and the governor decide to go with the wishes of the Squad Leader, so that as much as possible can be learned. Depending on how the scenario goes, you might ask one or two more participants to share what they think they would want to do in such a situation.
- For Optional TDG #4—recommended for line officer or fire managers) Ask two or three people to share their ideas. This TDG should push participants to think about what the best human response to the situation would be. There is no one right answer, but there sure could be some wrong answers. For this TDG the goal is a good discussion about the issues raised. It is important that someone broaches the topic of who will notify the next of kin and how will they go about doing it. If none of the responders brings that up in their response, put one of them on the spot. Pretend to be their supervisor and ask them “Will you notify the next of kin?” Then have them tell you how they will do it and what will they say Incident Stress Management?

Stand 6 – Ranger Jansson’s Turnaround

This Stand is designed to be done at the Harry T. Gisborne Memorial, as you are walking back out of Mann Gulch. This Stand is particularly pertinent if the Staff Ride includes fire managers. Stands 5 and 6 can be very involved emotionally, and thus can be powerful, especially if combined with the visiting of markers in between.

If you feel that you may not have the time, you may choose to combine Stands 5 and 6 together at the ridge top, prior to releasing folks to visit markers on the way back down.

Support Material

Collection of Stand Support Photos – Stand 6

Maps

Letter from Jansson to Wag Dodge – Facilitators Support tab

Travel Directions

GPS Coordinates: N 46°52.794' W 111°54.239'

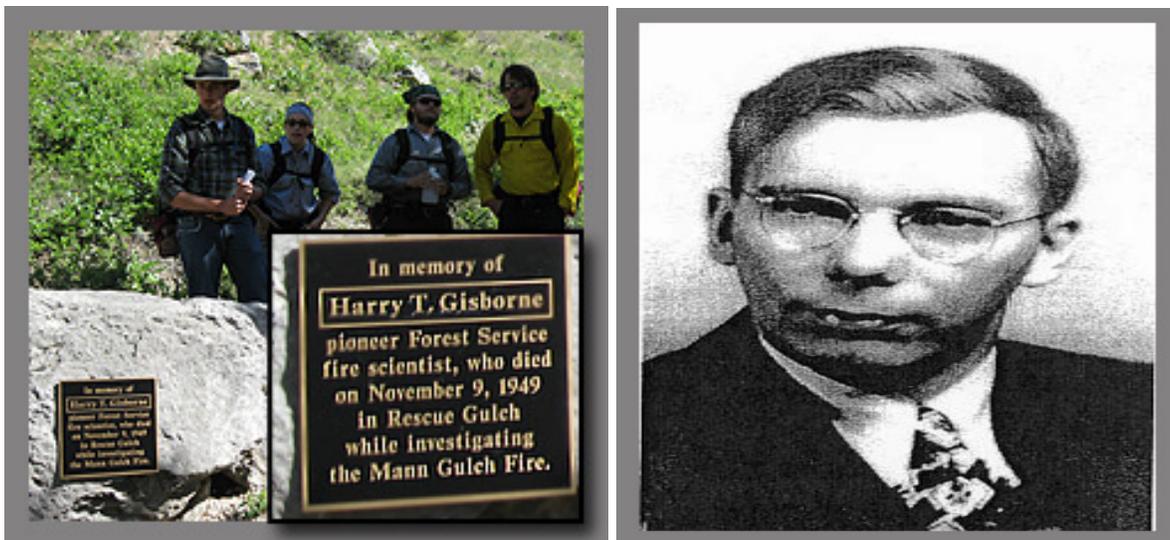
As you are hiking down toward the mouth of Mann Gulch, the Harry T. Gisborne Memorial site should be found approximately 0.5 miles up from the boat launch. You should've passed this site going from Stand 1 to Stand 2. This is an undeveloped trail in the bottom of the gulch.

Terrain Orientation

Bottom of Mann Gulch

Ridge Top Fire Origin (approximately 0.4 miles southeast from here)

Spot Fires (that Jansson could see in the bottom and on the north side of Mann Gulch)



Stand 6 – Background Information

- Ranger Jansson began working at the Canyon Ferry Ranger District in 1941, and in the spring of 1945 was appointed Ranger.

- Jansson performed multiple fire duties during August 4 and 5. On the 4th the district began to pick up new fire starts at 4:00 PM. Jansson spent the evening mobilizing firefighters, doing lookout duties and then took over dispatching responsibilities at 5:15 PM, including ordering food and other logistical duties as needed. He shut down dispatch at 11:20 PM. Jansson was back at 7:00 AM checking on more fires and dispatching firefighters. He went on an aerial detection flight at 10:45 AM.
- It was at this point that Ranger Jansson turned around after walking up Mann Gulch to scout the fire and ascertain if in fact jumpers had made a jump into Mann Gulch. He started his walk up Mann Gulch at 5:02 PM. He had walked about 40 chains when he noticed the fire had crossed the bottom of Mann Gulch in two places, one about two acres and the other five acres. This is the point where Jansson thought he heard voices up the gulch. He proceeded another 100 yards to investigate. He didn't hear them again and the fire was growing hotter. Somewhere between 5:18 and 5:20 PM he turned around to get out of there, and had to run through some flames. He had just cleared the flames when he passed out. When he revived consciousness the fire was only a few feet away and backing toward him. At about 5:45 PM he headed back to Meriwether in the boat.
- Jansson still did not know if the smokejumpers had ever jumped. He hoped that if they had jumped the smokejumpers would take care of themselves and were probably in drainage to the north of Mann Gulch.
- Finally at 8:30 PM Missoula was contacted and it was confirmed that a jump had occurred earlier in the day. Jansson still did not know where exactly they had jumped. At 9:20 PM Dodge made contact with Jansson in the Meriwether camp and confirmed the jump and location. This was the first time Jansson learned that an accident had happened.
- Jansson lead the rescue effort through Sunday afternoon, August 7. The first body he found was his employee, Jim Harrison. Then he found eight of the others.
- In November of 1949 Ranger Jansson took Fire Researcher Harry Gisborne into Mann Gulch to do research on the fire behavior during the blow-up of Mann Gulch. Jansson and Gisborne spent the day in and around Mann Gulch. On the walk back to their vehicle Gisborne collapsed and died of an apparent heart attack.
- In the spring of 1950 Jansson transferred to the Priest Lake Ranger District. Bob Jansson passed away November of 1965, after an 11 year battle with polycystic kidney disease, a rare condition that is usually triggered by stress.

Facilitator Suggestions

Suggested Persons of Interest: Robert (Bob) Jansson, Canyon Ferry District Ranger and possibly Harry T. Gisborne. (See link to Gisborne information on Travel Directions, Facilitator Support tab)