



Leadership and Network of Women in Fire from Latin America

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ABSTRACT- Governments, agencies, fire managers, and communities across Latin America recognize fire as a critical natural process. Life and safety, property and economics, biodiversity and conservation, society and culture; all drive response and relationship to fire. Women among the decision-makers, managers, and responders to fire are gaining visibility in their respective organizations and regionally in Latin America. The United States Forest Service, United States Agency for International Development and non-governmental organization Fondo Mexicano para la Conservación de la Naturaleza have collaborated on the Women in Fire initiative to promote visibility and leadership of women in fire management through networking and training. The initiative has achieved career impacts for participating women and stimulated change in their respective organizations. The fire management community is expanding training opportunities for women to participate in fire crews, and considering and accepting more women in leadership. The collaborating organizations formalized the first of what has become an annual event to gather women from Latin America with U.S. Forest Service counterparts to receive training, meet other women from the region, and learn from each other's experiences. The methodology aims to describe basic concepts of fire management, promote the application of new fire management tools and knowledge, identify fire management leadership tools to strengthen women's role in fire, and to strengthen women's role in fire management. Sixty women from across Latin America participated in 2017-2019, completing basic fire management training, presentations and panels, field visits, and fire simulations. Beyond the technical skills gained, the women shared in practicing leadership abilities such as assertive communication, self-confidence, clear leader's intent, and trust in their teams. The events catalyzed additional fire line leadership training opportunities for women in Mexico and spurred women to seek and speak at fire training events across Latin America. The Women in Fire in Latin America network continues to grow and drive reflection, valuing the development of women as firefighters and fire managers and integrating their abilities to apply field, technical, and leadership experience to fire management.

Keywords: Women in fire; integrated fire management.

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