ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The 10 am Policy and Smoke Jumping: Setting the Stage for Disaster on America's Public Lands 1935-1988
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ABSTRACT: This thesis delves into the origins of aggressive fire suppression in America and the specifics of the "10 am" policy, implemented by the United States Forest Service in 1935. It does so by piecing pieces together the events of the historically tragic Mann Gulch Fire that occurred on August 5, 1949 in Helena, Montana, with a goal of not only showing what happened, but why events unfolded as they did at the Montana fire, how the guiding policy influenced those events, and how this event still effects the fire service. Through a mixture of primary and secondary sources this project applies a micro-historical lens to Mann Gulch to show the dramatic influence of the historically aggressive "10 am" policy had on the creation of the 12 elite Smokejumpers who died there. This policy not only drastically affected the ecology of America's public lands; it also contributed to a rise in firefighter fatalities. This thesis extrapolates an understanding of how gendered expectations with in the male dominated USFS and Smokejumping program affected the formation of this policy and the actions of the individuals on this tragic fire, and describes the eventual movement to a more accommodating fire policy after 1978. Finally it illuminates the ecological effects of such fire suppression practices and how they contributed to the catastrophic 1988 fire season at Yellowstone National Park which almost derailed the movement to inclusion of fire in management of America's public lands.