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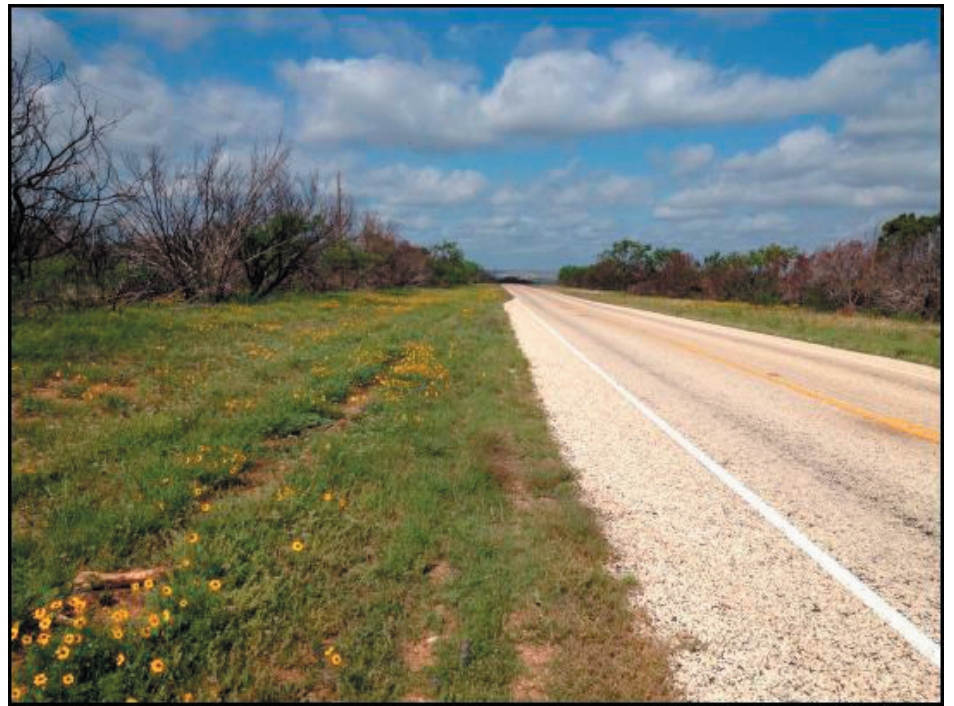


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Friday, April 20, 2012

What a Difference a Year Makes!



The photos above were taken on FM 2662 between US Highway 277 and State Highway 208. The one on the left was taken during the height of the Wildcat Fire. The one on the right was taken last week, exactly one year after the fire. It is evident the land is still scarred with charred trees, but grass and wildflowers cover what last year was scorched earth.

By Melinda McCutchen, publisher
It's hard to believe it's been a year since the Wildcat Fire. However, what a difference a year makes. Last year at this time, local and area firefighters were joined by firefighters from all over the country fighting a monstrous blaze in our county. Eventually, this

huge fire was contained with help from a large new aircraft which had never previously been used on a Texas fire. Let's look back at the timeline of the Wildcat Fire published in a special issue of the Observer/Enterprise dedicated to this fire on April 22, 2011.

• 11:30 pm, Sunday, April

10, 2011 – Fire started by lightning near the upper end of Mountain Road east of FM 2034 west of Robert Lee. Fire believed to be contained.

• Monday, April 11, 2011 – Fire flares and contained once more by county firefighters.

• Tuesday and Wednesday, April 12-13, 2011 – Fire contained to 75 acres.

• 5 pm, Thursday, April 14, 2011 – Fire flares at original location and, fanned by high winds, blazes out of control. Fire spreads quickly to canyons and hills between State Highway 208 and FM 2034, north and west of Robert Lee. In addition to local and area fire departments, Texas Forest Service arrives. Residents in the path of the fire are urged to get out.

• Early morning, Friday, April 15, 2011 – Fire races up western side of divide on Highway 208 before jumping the highway near the bottom of the divide.

• Friday, April 15, 2011 – Fire races on both sides of Highway 208 and pushes into Tom Green County. Several new evacuations ordered. A second fire begins burning approximately 8 miles north of Robert Lee on old Rough Creek Ranch. Firefighters believe they have extinguished second fire.

• Saturday morning, April 16, 2011 – Fire crosses to

west side of FM 2034 near the bottom of Mountain Road and Paint Creek Loop intersection. Evacuations start for residents west of Robert Lee along sections of FM 2034 and Highway 158. They are also ordered for residents near FM 2662.

• Saturday afternoon, April 16, 2011 – Fire jumped from the south side of FM 2662 to the north side on the west end near Highway 208. Fire on old Rough Creek Ranch flares and rages out of control before firefighters contain it.

• Sunday, April 17, 2011 – Fire rolls northeast toward Bronte. Evacuation ordered for Bronte before being rescinded. Fire is stopped from crossing north over FM 2662 on the east end near Highway 277. That night, the Tennyson area was evacuated.

• Monday, April 18, 2011 – Fire crosses Highway 277 in several spots on either side of Tennyson. Evacuation orders continue for Tennyson area and residents along Highway 277 south.

• Tuesday, April 19, 2011 – Evacuation remained in effect for residents on the west side of Highway 277 from FM 2662 to the Goodyear Proving Grounds. DC 10 arrives and begins fighting the fire with the 12,000 gallon payload it

carried.

• Wednesday, April 20, 2011 – Fire is primarily out in Coke County and “mop up” begins. All road closures and evacuation orders are now lifted in Coke County.

In 2011 before the Wildcat Fire, only the Diamond Plate fire near Blackwell had occurred. That fire was tiny in comparison with only 1,000 – 1,500 acres being lost. Before everything was said and done on the Wildcat Fire, over 160,000 acres burned. April 2011 was an extremely hard month for Coke County. However, June would also prove to be an exhausting month for area firefighters and emergency personnel. On the afternoon of June 8, 2011, the Dos Amigos contributed another 20,000 acres to the burned acreage total for Coke County. This fire began on the south side of Highway 158 approximately 14 miles west of Robert Lee. It quickly jumped the highway and raged north in the rough land west of FM 2059. On June 19, the White Hat Fire began in north central Coke County. It burned for several days and blackened over 72,500 acres in Coke and Nolan Counties before being contained. The final fires of 2011 were the Malone Fire north of Robert Lee and west

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County Rainfall Totals

	January	February	March	Total for Year
Dee & Dessie Kendall • Edith Area				
2011	0.0	0.09	0.10	0.19
2012	3.3	2.40	0.80	6.50
Bobby and Jeffie Roberts • Valley View Area				
2011	0.23	0.60	0.16	0.99
2012	3.40	2.80	1.00	7.20
Paul Sheffler • 7 Mile Hill				
2011	0.15	0.65	0.05	0.85
2012	3.50	2.75	0.75	7.00
Fran Sonnenberg • 3 miles E. of Bronte				
2011	0.12	0.80	0.10	1.02
2012	2.80	2.24	0.89	5.93
Charles & Dorris Sonnenberg • Bronte Area				
2011	0.14	0.72	0.07	0.93
2012	3.38	2.20	0.78	6.36
Wayne & Melinda McCutchen • 3 miles N. of Bronte				
2011	0.23	0.45	0.15	0.83
2012	3.11	2.11	0.83	6.05
Jerry & Susan Wellborn • 12 miles West of Robert Lee				
2011	0.25	0.0	0.10	0.35
2012	2.85	2.05	0.60	5.50