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By Annabeth Miller, SMT Editor

PUXICO - It's been a heck of a month for the fire fighting team from Mingo Job Corps.

Called to New York State to assist with intense flooding following Hurricane Irene, the crew got a call after just one week in New York to report for duty in Minnesota to help fight one of the largest fires in an active fire season.

Bob Waldner, supervisor of the Mingo crew, said that Minnesota fire – the Pagami Creek Fire – encompassed more than 100,000 acres in the most visited National Forest in the country – the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in the Superior National Forest, approximately 14 miles west of Ely, Minn.

The Pagami Creek Fire began in the early morning hours of Thursday, Aug. 18. The Forest Services reports the cause of the fire as a lightning strike.

Waldner reports that the nine young men on the Mingo Fire Team worked tirelessly and were commended for their work during their time in the area.

“I'm proud of them,” Waldner said. “They worked hard and did important work of getting the supplies to the firefighters out there fighting the fire.”

This fire was unique, because firefighters had to often get to the fire – and sometimes fight the blaze – by water. The fire has touched more than 93,000 acres of forest.

“The crew received some important recognitions for its work,” Walder said.

“On Monday, Sept. 26, 120 fire fighters were inserted into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, Twenty-seven thousand pounds of personal gear, food, water and fire fighting equipment was flown in by helicopter,” said Michael P. Heater, Air Operation Branch Director. “The Mingo Job Corps, Mingo Crew #1, was instrumental during the logistical process. They assisted with moving the cargo from trunks into 45 separate longline nets that were subsequently flown by helicopter to seven different camp locations. Mingo Crew #1 demonstrated sincere enthusiasm, dedication and strength, which greatly contributed to the fire fighting effort. They are truly ‘Wildland Fire Fighters.’”

In addition, Waldner reports the team received high praise from the job supervisor.

“The Mingo Crew #1 performed in an outstanding manner,” wrote Timothy Bonds in an official performance rating. “This was a complex logistical fire and their initiative and attitude greatly assisted in meeting operational demand throughout the incident. Within a few days of being on the incident the crew obtained the knowledge and expertise to meet daily supply demand. I would work with this team/crew again and look forward to seeing them again on another incident.”

As Bonds wrote, “Great job!”

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