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(Neb.)-Names Released In Spotted Tail Fire Charges

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 12/19/2012 09:05 AM

(Chadron)-Three Chadron men in their 20s are facing federal charges for allegedly starting and failing to extinguish a fire in the Nebraska National Forest in October. According to The Chadron Record, Jacob Marshall, 27, William Jones and Andrew Meister, both 26, are being charged with a combined five counts.

The information was previously unreleased through the local office as there were federal charges pending, but The Chadron Record was able to obtain information from federal officials after filing a Freedom of Information Act request. Initially, it was believed the release of the names would not necessarily be available until quite some time later, but The Chadron Record proceeded with the request, and according to Record Editor George Ledbetter, they did receive a response this week.

Marshall and Jones each face two counts, which are using an explosive and leaving a fire without extinguishing it. Meister is charged only with leaving a fire without extinguishing it. The three men were charged after the Spotted Tail Fire, which started on October 20, burned 83 acres of US Forest Service Land. The trio were allegedly using exploding targets during recreational shooting when the fire started. There were also fire restrictions in place at the time due to the drought which prohibited use of explosives on Forest Service land.

Each count carries penalties of up to \$5000 in fines and six months in jail. The Forest Service plans to seek restitution, with initial estimates for fire suppression at \$175,000, although final costs are still being determined.

(Story courtesy of The Chadron Record)