FIREBREAK
By Charlie Hoopes

Overview

Number of Players: *1-5*
Ages: *10 - Adult*
Playing Time: *30-45 minutes*

Players must work together to contain an outbreak of raging forest fires. Your team must save as many cabins, airports, conservation areas, and lakes as possible. However, every turn the fire spreads, and in which direction is as unpredictable as the wind.

Contents

7 Map Tiles	24 New Blaze Cards	30 Blaze/Burnout Markers
6 Map Edge Tiles	15 Wind Shift Cards	5 Player Aid Cards
Damage Board	15 Spread Cards	8 Ranger Tokens
1 Damage Board Cube	10 Pumps	8 Role Cards
40 Firebreaks	1 Tanker Plane Tile	Wind Marker
6 Rest Tokens		

The Board
The board consists of 7 tiles, each with 7 spaces. The spaces are two different shades of green.

Light Forest – Shaded with lighter green

Dense forests - Shaded with darker green. Dense forests ignite more easily when the flames and sparks blow downwind.
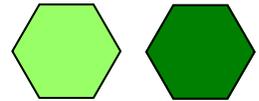
Hills — Hills may be either light or dense forest. Hills hinder movement.

Mountain – The mountain space is impassable. It is the only space where blazes can never spread. Place the wind marker on the mountain tile to keep track of the wind direction.

Some spaces contain valuable natural or man-made features that you will want to protect from the flames.

Airport	Lake	Wildlife Preserve	Lodge	Ranger Station

Airports – Rangers may fly a tanke plane from these spaces. If a blaze spreads to an airport space, that airport is destroyed and may not be used the rest of the game. If both airports are destroyed, rangers can no longer fly tanker planes to extinguish blazes.

Lakes - Water in lakes can be pumped to extinguish blazes. Blazes may spread to lake spaces, yet do not destroy the lakes themselves. If a burning lake space is extinguished, it can once again be used as a water source.

Nature Preserves – Nature Preserves are native habitats for endangered wildlife. They give your rangers no extra benefit.

Lodges & Ranger Stations – Rangers may rest when in one of these spaces

Game Concepts

Firebreaks – Forest rangers deep in the wilderness often have no access to water to extinguish a blaze. Instead they use bulldozer, axe, saw, and shovel to make a line clear of trees, fallen logs, underbrush, and anything that can burn. When the blaze reaches a firebreak, it can spread no further because the fuel has been removed. However, if a firebreak isn't wide enough, strong winds can blow sparks and burning embers over the bare ground to ignite new fuel on the other side, allowing a fire to jump the firebreak and keep spreading.

Blaze Markers – Blaze markers show which spaces have burning fires. Rangers may never enter a space containing a blaze marker. Once a blaze marker is placed on a space, it remains the rest of the game unless a player extinguishes that blaze.

Burn-out Markers – When a blaze is extinguished, flip the blaze marker to the burn out side. Airports, cabins or wildlife preserves that were on the space before the blaze are gone for the rest of the game. Lakes that were on the space before the blaze still exist and may once again be used as a water srouce. Rangers may safely enter a burned-out space.

Set Up

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Step 1 - Lay out Tiles
Randomly arrange the 7 tiles as shown to the right. Place one tile in the center. Surround with the other 6 tiles. Use the 6 two-space border tiles to fill in the gaps around the edges.

You may use either side of a tile, and may orient each tile in any direction. The side of the tile with a black star is *slightly* more difficult than the unmarked side.

Step 2 -Choose Difficulty
Count out 25 blaze markers Place unused blaze markers back in the box.

Step 3 - Set up Play Area
Set the blaze markers, firebreaks, and damage board next to the playing area.
Shuffle the 3 card decks and place next to the playing area.

Step4 - Choose Roles
Shuffle the role cards and deal one to each player. (For a 2-player game, use 4 rangers, with each player controlling 2 rangers). Use the ranger tokens whose colors match the role cards. Place the ranger in its listed starting space. Give each ranger two pumps.

Step 5 - Set Starting Wind Direction
Place the wind marker on the mountain space. Spin the spinner to set the starting wind direction.

Step 6- Place Starting Blazes

Number of Starting Blazes

Determine the total number of starting blazes as follows:

> 1 Blaze per Ranger , plus one additional blaze (i.e. 5 starting blazes for a 4-ranger game)
> Add 1 Blaze for Smokeater (Intermediate) difficulty
> Add 2 Blazes for Inferno (Toughest) difficulty

Example: A 3-ranger game at Inferno difficulty would use 6 starting blazes: 4 blazes for a 3-ranger game and +2 for Inferno.

Where to Place Starting Blazes

Reveal the top card of the New Blaze deck, and place a blaze on each of the 3 spaces indicated.

If that space already has a blaze on it, move on to the next space listed on that card.

As needed, draw more cards until the full number of starting blazes have been lit.
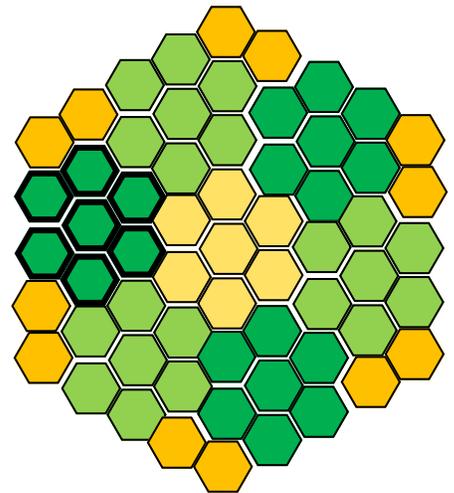
Step 1: Ranger Actions

On the first turn, the ranger with the lowest number in the upper right corner of their role card moves first. Play proceeds clockwise around the table.

Your ranger has 4 actions to spend each turn. You may use these actions to:

       Move (action)
       Build a Firebreak (1 action)
       Fly (2 actions)
       Control Burn (2 actions)
       Deploy Pump (1 action)
       Operate Pump (2 actions)
       Rest (Save 1 action for a future turn)

Move - Spend one action to move up to 3 spaces, but stop if you enter a space with either a hill or burnout.

You may choose to remove your ranger from the board. If you do so, you sacrifice all remaining actions that turn. On the next turn, the ranger may reenter onto any board edge.

Build a Firebreak (1 action)
Your ranger may place one firebreak on the boundary of your space and an adjacent space. You may place a second firebreak where one already exists to create a double fire-break.
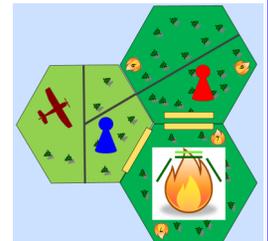
These rangers have dug a single and double firebreak to prevent this blaze from spreading

Fly (2 actions)
If you are on the airport space , you may spend two actions to fly the tanker and extin-guish a blaze. Choose one burning space anywhere on the board, flip the blaze marker to its burn-out side, and place the ranger in the extinguished space. **Flip the Tanker tile to the empty side**.

Controlled Burn (2 actions)
Controlled burns are deliberate supervised burning of an area to deprive approaching blazes of fuel. Place a burn-out marker in the same space as your ranger. You may not do a controlled burn in a space with a lodge, ranger station lake, airport, or wildlife preserve.

Deploy Pump (1 action)
A ranger may place one of their pumps in the space they occupy. (The Operate Pump action explains to how to use pumps to extinguish blazes.) Once deployed, a pump may not be moved. A pump is destroyed and removed from the game if a blaze spreads into the same space.
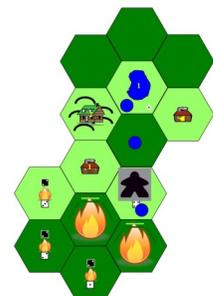
The black ranger may use the pumps leading from the lake to extinguish either (but not both) of the two blazes to which it is adjacent.

Operate Pump (2 actions)
A ranger in the same space as a pump may extinguish a blaze in an adjacent space so long as:

- The pump is in a lake space, OR it is part of a chain of adjacent pumps that trace back to a lake space.

To extinguish a fire, flip the blaze marker to the burn-out side.

Rest (1 action)
A ranger at a lodge or ranger station may rest. Resting saves an unused action for a future turn. Gain a rest token. The rest token may be spent on a subsequent turn to take an extra action. Each ranger may only store one rest token.

Step 2: Shift Wind
Draw a wind shift card and move the wind marker to change the wind direction.

Step3: Fire Grows
Draw a spread card and increase the spread track by that value. If the track is at 7 or less, do nothing and start the next player's turn. However, whenever the spread track grows to 8 or more, then:
  1) Flames will spread in the same direction as the wind, and
  2) A new blaze will be added to the board.

Flames Spread
For every blaze on the board:
  Place a new blaze marker on the space directly downwind, and
  Place a new blaze marker on every dense forest (dark green)
      space on either side of the wind direction.

However blazes do not spread:
  Into the mountain space
  Into a burned-out space
  Across a firebreak
  Off the playing area

The wind is out of the northwest, blowing to the southeast..
With no firebreaks, this blaze will:

- Spread to space 2 (directly downwind)
- Spread to space 3 (dense forest to the side of the direction)
- Not spread to space 1 (light forest to side of wind direction)

Double firebreaks permanently block blazes from spreading.

Single firebreaks prevent blazes from spreading. However, when the wind blows a blaze *directly (downwind)* into a single firebreak, remove that firebreak unless there is a ranger in the same space. (The fire-break is compromised unless a ranger is there to maintain it.)

Whenever flames spread into a space listed on the damage board, remove an unused blaze marker from the game and cover the spot on the damage board with the burnout side of a blaze marker.

If a blaze spreads into a space with your forest ranger, you must immediately move your ranger to an adjacent (non-burning) space. As a penalty, you have one less action on the next turn (lay the ranger token on its side as a reminder). If all adjacent spaces also contain blazes, remove your forest ranger token from the board. You may re-enter from any board edge on the next turn.

Start a New Blaze

To determine where the new blaze starts, draw a card and work down the list of 3 spaces until a blaze starts at one of them.

- If the space is empty, place a blaze on that space;
- If that space is occupied by a burnout marker, start the new blaze by flipping the burnout back over to the flame side. (a hot spot flares back up)
- If that space is occupied buy a flame or a ranger, drop down to the next space in the list.

If it is not possible to reignite or start a new blaze on any of three spaces listed, then no new blazes start.

Ending the Game

The game ends in a win if there are two *consecutive* times that no blazes spread after the spread track reaches 8. (There is a tile to flip as a reminder after the first no spread).

The game ends in a loss if there are no more blaze markers to place on the board when needed for either a flames spread or new blaze. (You do not lose when you run out of blaze markers - you lose if you cannot place the next marker after you have run out.)

Hollow Victory - You've lost, yet you feel you could have gained control over the blazes with just a few more turns? Throw the extra blaze markers onto the table, keep playing and see if you can achieve the victory condition of two consecutive flames spread with no spreading caused by the wind.

Increasing the Challenge

There are ways to adjust Firebreak to make it a challenging yet winnable game for teams of any skill level.

For teams of first time players, it is recommended you play your first game at Campfire difficulty. (Unless you enjoy losing quickly)

At any difficulty level, you can increase the challenge by removing some blaze markers at the start of the game and playing with less than 25 blazes.

Radio Silence - For an extremely challenging game, ban strategy conversations between players unless their two rangers occupy the same or adjacent spaces. Social conversation is fine.

Roles

Controlled Burn Specialist - Your control when burning dense underbrush and old forest leaves fewer obvious scars afterward. ***You may do a control burn action from an adjacent space.***

Digger - You dig firebreaks faster than anyone. ***May place 2 firebreaks for one action.***

Hot Shot - A special title reserved for only the most capable fire rangers. ***You get an extra action on your turn.***

Knock Down Specialist - You are skilled in hosing down buildings and knocking down blowing embers. ***Blazes never spread into the space your ranger occupies.***

Pilot - You always score hits when you're the one flying over the flames. ***You may spend three actions to fly the tanker plane and extinguish two blazes in adjacent spaces.***

Pump Specialist - You know how to stretch every last meter out of your hoses and pumps yet still deliver enough water pressure to tame the flames. ***You may operate a pump from an adjacent space.***

Smoke Jumper - You paradrop to remote inaccessible areas to battle the flames. ***For one action , you may move from an airport to any other space on the board. Plus build one free firebreak in the space you jump into. (This Smoke Jumping action is different from the Fly action available to other rangers. Using the Smoke Jumping action does not flip the tanker tile to its empty side.)***

Trailmaster - You know every trail, to include some that aren't on any maps. ***Ignore hills and burnouts, you always move 3 spaces. But not through the mountain. Even you may not enter the mountain.***

Playtest Credits:

Version 1

Playtester Credits: AaronH, AustinS, PatrickB, SteveS, TheresaM, BrianE, – JimR, JordanM, SamH, DamianM, AliT, AndreR, NickF, BradS, BeccaS, LauraD, NatL, DaveB, BenB, KevinK, DenisM, PhilipL, JeffK, BarbV, RichardR, VincentI, EdG, GordonD, Neil, LarryH, BillH, WayneH, JohnM, PaulO, BruceV, TomB, DanM, ScottC, JimJ, BeccaM, MarcN, MattL, BlairC, MikeM, ChrisK, ToddB, DrewB, EricH, JeffW

Junior Playtester Credits: Thomas, Tierna, Adam, Greyson, Scott, Casey, Leo, Gabe, Andrew

Firebreak ver 1 was publically playtested at the following venues:

South Jersey Unpub, Woodbury NJ	4/20/13
Five Stone Bookstore, Lebanon PA	4/24/13
Collector's Con Protozone, Baltimore MD	5/11/13
Labyrinth Good Moves Game Club, Washington DC	5/22/13
Six Feet Under Unpub Mini, New Holland PA	6/1/13
Games & Stuff Unpub Mini, Glen Burnie MD	6/8/13
World Boardgame Championship, Lancaster PA	8/1/13
Congress of Gamers Unpub, Rockville MD	9/28/13
Great Big Table Extra Life Gameathon, Evansville IN	10/26/13
Unpub 4, Dover DE	1/18/14

And then Firebreak found a publisher! And was offered a contract! And then it all fell through. Two years later... 🙁

Version 2

Playtester Credits: BrianS, DanV, MarkD, TaminY, JohnB, DavidM, AaronW, ChrisH, ChristopherH, JulieH, NatL, AndrewP, Nick. TC, JayT, LukeP, TamM, AustinS, SteveC. ShaunM, HowardR, ZachR, KevinC, RyanG, DanielK, PhillipW, TaniaS, MikeM, GregL, KurtH, ShawnW, JeremyS, JoeH, MarcusM, MikeM, GaelleL, TylorK, BrianV, ChristinaD, StephenD, JaredT, EricG, JasonS, AndrewM, DonaldG, VictoriaH, DavidC, JaredB, JimyaL, ChrisP, ScottH, PaulO, TimN, RachealP, KeithF, RandyH, CharlesW, JasonK, TraciW, KatherineR, BeckyR, LarryR, MattC, AmandaS, MichelleA, AdriannaA, IanZ, RogerH, JustinB, ChristopherC, AaronH, AustinS, RoscoeS, BillL, AnthonyA, CynthiaB, BobC, NickG

Firebreak ver 2 was publically playtested at the following venues:

Unpub Mini, Games Keep, West Chester PA	9/17/16
Metatopia 2016, Morristown NJ	11/4/16-11/5/16
Let's Play PA, Harrisburg PA	2/18/17
Unpub7, Baltimore MD	3/19/17
Origins 2017, Columbus, OH	6/15/17-6/17/17
Unpub Mini Games Keep, West Chester PA	5/19/18

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