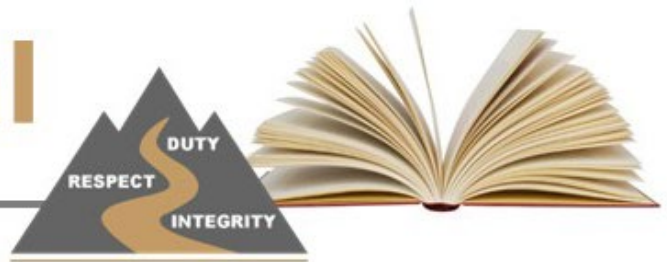


# Professional Reading Program

Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program



## ***Surf When You Can* by Captain Brett Crozier (USN Retired)**

**Best Wildland Fire Leadership Level to read this book:**

- Levels 3 (Leader of People) through 5 (Leader of Organizations).

### ***Why Read Surf While You Can?***

*“Tell someone what to do and they’ll do the task you set before them. Teach them how to think for themselves and they’ll solve problems on their own for the rest of their lives.”*

*“As a leader, I tried to approach every situation with an understanding about other people’s inherent desire to do good. It never let me down. Holding on to that fundamental principle – treating people the way I wanted to be treated – helped me be the best leader I could possibly be. I believe it helped those around me be the best they could be as well.”*

*Surf While You Can* is a book full of leadership lessons gained from a career as a Naval aviator and ship Captain. The simple but powerful ideas and concepts the author shares are easily applied to the wildland fire setting, and to all levels of leadership. The author’s experiences as a new recruit learning to fly helicopters to a Captain commanding 5,000 people on a carrier can be useful to leaders of all types, from new firefighters leading a squad all the way to experienced fire managers leading programs.

For more leadership ideas and to dig deeper, check out the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP) blog, Facebook page, Professional Reading Program, and more at the links below:

**Blog:** <http://wildlandfireleadership.blogspot.com/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/WFLDP>

**Professional Reading Program:** <https://www.nwccg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/professional-reading-program>

**Main WFLDP page:** <https://www.nwccg.gov/training/wildland-fire-leadership-development-program>

## *Surf While You Can Discussion Questions*

### **Chapter One: Never Turn Down Espresso**

How do you build relationships with your team and those around you in your organization? How can you build relationships quickly with others? Why are these relationships important to leadership and team performance?

### **Chapter Two: Learn Like You're Going To Live Forever**

Why is it important to set ego aside when learning? How can failure in a learning environment make you a better person and leader? Why is it important for leaders to be honest with themselves and others when it comes to things like skills and abilities? Over the course of his career, the author took on new career opportunities that involved learning new skills and taking on new challenges. Have you tackled any “new” things like that in your career? How can you learn from those you work with as a leader and a follower?

### **Chapter Three: When In Doubt, Be Kind**

How can something as simple as treating others the way you want to be treated be valuable as a leader? How has it made you feel as a follower or leader to be treated with kindness as the author describes it in this chapter? How do you handle making mistakes with how you treat those around you? Why is it important to know when, and how, to make things right when you make mistakes as a leader? How can kindness build trust?

### **Chapter Four: Focus On The Closest Alligator**

What do you think of the jar full of rocks/pebbles/sand analogy for how to set priorities in your life? What strategies do you have to minimize distractions and focus on what's important? How do you communicate to your team/module/crew what really matters? How can you, as a leader or follower, make sure that goals are kept simple and clear, and that everyone on the team understands them?

### **Chapter Five: Pull Like A Clydesdale**

What do you think about the role of the leader in taking care of your people and trusting them to respond in kind? Does the idea of “take care of your people, and they'll take care of you” mean anything to you? Why or why not? How can you know and understand the importance of everyone on the team? How can you make sure that they know you know how important they are?

### **Chapter Six: Play Small Ball**

What does it mean to you to focus on fundamentals as a leader? What is the value in preparing for things that might happen, as well as things you know will happen? How do you build the knowledge to be able to deviate from the “normal” when needed?

## **Chapter Seven: Surf When You Can**

Why is it important to take time away from the workplace? Do you have anything outside your work that allows you thrive at work? How do you balance the needs of the jobs with your personal well-being? Do you take the long view of your life when making decisions (AKA the “rocking chair test”)?

## **Chapter Eight: Speak Up When Things Are NKR**

How do you empower people around you to speak up when something is “NKR?” Why is that important as a wildland fire leader? Why is important to be empowered to speak up as a follower? Can rank or titles get in the way of clear and timely communication when things aren’t quite right? How can you make sure you, and those around you, know when and what to speak up about?

## **Chapter Nine: Take A Stand**

Why is accountability so important in leadership? Not only holding others accountable, but being willing to be held accountable for making the difficult right decisions, or for making the wrong decisions? Have you ever been in a situation where doing what you thought was right in a situation wasn’t viewed that way by your superiors? Have you ever had someone you led do something they thought was right, but you thought was wrong? How did you approach that situation as a leader, or as a follower? Why is it important to have good communication skills, and good relationships with those around you, when you think about difficult decisions and accountability?