

Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration



Selected Highlights: January - June 2013

Under the Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration (PERC) agreement, partners work through the Fire Learning Network (FLN). This network fosters collaboration in landscapes across the country, provides experiential training opportunities, and supports communication and public outreach about fire and restoration. It also guides the targeted restoration actions conducted under Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER). This spring saw the launch of the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, which will take lessons learned from the FLN and apply them to a new network of communities as they work towards being able to safely coexist with wildfire. The numerous connections among these programs make each more effective at promoting healthy ecosystems and fire-adapted human communities.

Restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes

A central goal of FLN landscapes and regional networks is to promote landscape resiliency through restoration actions, training and outreach efforts. Most FLNs are now regularly conducting treatments that are moving landscapes toward desired conditions, and SPER funding has allowed six landscapes to complete specific strategic treatments.



A fire burns through light fuels in a prescribed fire in the Ashland Watershed. Strategically placed treatments like this are helping to protect the people and water supplies of Ashland, while also increasing the resilience of the surrounding forests. © Brian Ballou/Oregon Dept. of Forestry

Filling the Gaps: Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency Funding Protects Watershed in Ashland, Oregon

Thinning, selective logging, and prescribed fire treatments now underway will help protect this watershed from catastrophic damage from wildfires, thus ensuring the water supply for this city of 20,000 people.

A relatively small contribution of SPER funding has allowed a \$7 million federal watershed project to proceed more efficiently and effectively. By supporting work done on city and private lands intermingled with the federal lands, partners from the Forest Service, City of Ashland, The Nature Conservancy and Lomakatsi Restoration Project are able to conduct treatments on units that make ecological and physical sense, rather than based on unnatural straight-line ownership boundaries. This allows treatments to be placed where they will do the most good, and lowers the cost of prescribed fire treatments by allowing the use of natural features to control the fire.



Participants in prescribed fire training exchanges get practice speaking to reporters (above, in the background). Engagement with the media is a key means of communicating with local communities, as well as joining a national dialog on fire. Work this spring resulted in more than 20 stories in the media, ranging from the Ashland Daily Tidings to NPR's Morning Edition and the cover of Nature Conservancy magazine. © Jeremy Bailey/TNC

Fire-adapted communities

Over the years, many FLN partnerships have discovered that developing fire adapted local communities is integral to meeting their goals and they have been working with communities towards this end. More recently, the FLN model itself has been adapted to develop a new network explicitly devoted to promoting the spread of fire adapted communities. The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network was launched this spring, holding its first workshop in April.



The core of a new network gathered in Boise in April to launch the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network. Among the participants were members of teams from communities in eight states, mentors and facilitators from several agencies and organizations, and researchers from two universities, whose studies of the network will be useful in helping the network measure its progress and adapt as needed.

Social and operational capacity for response to wildland fire

The partnership supports capacity for managing wildland fire by providing training experiences that increase the skill and range of knowledge of traditional wildland fire practitioners, and draw other land managers and municipal and volunteer fire departments into the pool of people who can safely and effectively use and manage fire. Outreach tied to training events and prescribed burning addresses some of the social concerns about fire—thus increasing the ability to use fire—as has FLN engagement with prescribed fire councils.



In May, key stakeholders met to initiate the FLN's newest collaborative landscape team, Mendocino FireScope. © Mary Huffman/TNC

FLN Expanding in California

The FLN engaged two new landscape collaboratives this spring. Mendocino FireScope was launched with strong engagement by the Mendocino NF supervisor. Early steps for this landscape include involving the entire forest staff plus stakeholders from many local jurisdictions in various levels of planning and implementation. FLN staff also worked with leaders of the Mid Klamath Restoration Partnership on the first workshop and field trip in series designed to bring stakeholders together to build trust and to identify priority locations for restoration projects. That workshop brought together forest supervisors and staff from the Klamath NF and Six Rivers NF, the Karuk tribe, and a range of community members. The FLN is working to connect these new landscapes with the fairly new FireScope Monterey FLN and the well-established California Klamath-Siskiyou FLN.

The September 2012 Pole Creek Fire was the focus of discussion for over 100 people who took part in two public tours co-hosted by the Northwest FLN in June. These tours provided opportunities for multi-way dialogue and shared learning among community members and Forest Service staff—and engaged many segments of the community not otherwise represented in collaborative processes in the region. © Marika Yuma

Prescribed Fire Training Exchange Model Spreading

Prescribed fire training exchanges have been offered under the PERC agreement since 2008, bringing together diverse groups of participants to share knowledge, improve their qualifications, and increase capacity. These hands-on trainings also increase the social license needed to use fire by bringing local knowledge—of social and economic values, as well as fire—into the mix, and by actively engaging with the media.

Recent efforts have focused on expanding the impact of these trainings by mentoring others interested in hosting them. The April training in the Loess Hills, for example, was organized and led by FLN partners in that landscape. Staff also worked intensively this spring with two groups that will be hosting trainings in the fall: the Forest Guild, which will lead a week-long exchange near Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the California Klamath-Siskiyou FLN, hosting a two-week exchange in northern California.

Science, cultural knowledge and adaptive learning

FLNs provide an important link between science and action on the ground, by engaging both scientists and practitioners, and through ties to the JFSP consortia and similar groups in their regions. As important, FLNs bring cultural knowledge—tribal and contemporary experience-based locally-adapted practices—to the table. The result is a richer, shared understanding of problems, and potential solutions, that allows landscapes to move forward and adapt as needed.

Adaptation for Conservation Targets (ACT)

In March, the Jemez Mountains FLN and Southwest Climate Change Initiative delivered a workshop to teams from six western landscapes. Leaders guided the teams through a streamlined version of the new ACT process, which integrates climate change into traditional planning tools, to help the teams determine whether ACT would be appropriate for their projects. At least two of the teams are planning to move ahead with some form of ACT to guide their planning.

Landscape-level strategies for a changing climate

The FLN is advancing adaptation to a changing climate both by developing new tools, and by incorporating climate change as a part of the ongoing conversations and actions on FLN landscapes.



Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration: Landscapes, Learning and Restoration is a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Lynn Decker at ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.

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