

# Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together (PERFACT)

A cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior

## DELIVERING ON A VISION FOR A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH FIRE

The PERFACT partnership works to restore our relationship with fire by moving us toward “right fire”—where good fire can do its work on the landscape, and both human and natural communities are better able to live with fire. We invest in the people who share our goal of implementing the integrated tenets of the Cohesive Strategy, helping them develop the resources and relationships they need to succeed. We work in key places, with the people and organizations leading the charge locally, and also at regional and national scales to create enabling conditions and to facilitate the spread of innovations.

PERFACT works through interwoven strategic efforts. The Fire Learning Network (FLN) fosters collaboration for restoration and integrated fire management in landscapes across the country. The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC Net) supports and connects people and communities who are striving to live more safely with wildfire. The Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN) supports traditional burning knowledge and practices to perpetuate traditions and a healthy environment. Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) and cooperative burns provide experiential training that integrates a

range of people, places and aspects of fire, expanding our collective capacity to manage fire well.

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NETWORKS

As a mature network, the FLN is focusing on strengthening its leadership and partnerships, with an emphasis on diversifying local coordinating capacity and building a sustainable interjurisdictional workforce. Cross-network coordination proved essential to these efforts—for example, FLN leaders in Oregon and Washington collaborated to facilitate a joint workshop between their two prescribed fire councils. TREX events in Oregon benefitted from peer assists from FLN partners in the Island Park, South Central and Southern Blue Ridge FLNs. Formation of the Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association in northern California—the first in the state—was the direct result of learning exchanges over the past year with partners in Nebraska. Such investments have also been fundamental in informing or implementing statewide policy, such as the 2928 Forest Resiliency Burning Pilot in Washington and the California governor’s May 10, 2018 executive order for protecting communities from wildfire and climate impacts.



Members of the network builders community of practice work through network design questions and concepts at their spring workshop.

PERFACT is a leader in the practice of network design and implementation. Staff from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network regularly share their expertise in designing and stewarding learning networks, both within and beyond FAC Net. This spring this included a three-day network leadership session for FAC Net members working on statewide community wildfire adaptation networks, as well as network design sessions in New Mexico and Montana. Reaching beyond the network, lessons from PERFACT networks were shared at a workshop of network leaders in The Nature Conservancy; at the workshop, FAC Net and the Fire Learning Network were held up as model social impact networks, and researcher Dr. Bruce Goldstein and a FAC Net staff member presented a case study on how FAC Net has fostered member connections and addressed network evaluation.

© WRTC (Emily Troisi)

FAC Net members are expanding their visions of what is possible, and as a result are tackling new issues and trying new approaches. For example,

the New Jersey Fire Safety Council implemented its first wildfire drills for first responders and residents. The Council is also involved in a reciprocal

prescribed fire learning exchange with peers in Long Island, New York. This exchange—two events that involved 58 people—was spearheaded by another network member, the Forest Stewards Guild. Meanwhile, in New Mexico the Guild also had another first, hosting a community asset mapping workshop in Santa Fe. Working across networks, FLN and FAC Net contacts in Georgia are engaging that state’s prescribed fire council to improve enabling conditions for prescribed burning in the northern part of the state.

Members of the TREX Coaches Network organized and led seven PERFECT-supported TREX this spring,



Taping an interview at the Central Oregon TREX. Outreach about the benefits of prescribed fire continues to be a focus in central Oregon. This TREX provided opportunities to engage local media, and to capture professional quality photos and video that will be used by partners in public service announcements and social media campaigns.  
© TNC (Pete Caligiuri)



During the Fire Networks Workshop field tour, participants learn about some of the wildfires that burned close to Lake Chelan in 2015. The group then took part in a role-playing exercise based on the 2928 Forest Resiliency Burning Pilot.  
© TNC (Liz Rank)

along with a cooperative burn week in Iowa and a fire tour of the Great Plains that were fully supported with other funds. Together, the 227 participants in the seven TREX completed 3,430 acres of burning, most of which was in support of priorities set by FLN and FAC Net partners and hosts. In northern New Mexico, where unusually warm and dry conditions precluded burning, the TREX went forward anyway, with crews turning to other essential work, like training and community engagement in support of local FAC Net efforts.

In late May, members of the FLN, FAC Net, IPBN and TREX Coaches Network gathered in central Washington, along with key national partners and members of the Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, for a national Fire Networks Workshop. This was the first time members of all the national networks met together, so opportunities for cross-network connections and planning for co-work were maximized. The diversity of participants also provided glimpses into work being done at many scales, and sessions

addressed a wide range of fire-related issues across the full before-during-after wildfire cycle.

### WORKING TOGETHER IN KEY PLACES

When PERFECT strategies come together in a location, the effects are multiplied. This can be seen now across a large landscape along the border between New Mexico and Colorado, where a broad array of organizations, agencies, contractors and collaboratives are scaling up the use of beneficial fire. Key players are members and partners in the FLN, FAC Net and TREX coaches network, with the various projects learning from, complementing and supporting each other. The Rio Grande Water Fund (RGWF), an FLN landscape, has been at the core of this for several years; its planning efforts laid out a strategic direction for increasing the resiliency of forests in the watershed that serves half the population of New Mexico. Numerous TREX in and near the RGWF landscape over the last few years—including the Taos and Chama TREX this spring—are building workforce capacity in the state. The TREX also provide opportunities for people and organizations to work together. The use of agreements, sharing of resources, and coordination of burn teams is

helping a whole new community of fire practitioners form, grow and build support networks that will continue to achieve good fire. The TRES also support FAC Net efforts, through treatments, trainings and community outreach; when the Chama TRES crews were unable to burn because of this spring's weather, they turned to other work, including partnering with FAC Net member FireWise of Southwest Colorado on home assessment training.

Also active in this landscape is the Burned Area Learning Network, an initiative coordinated by the New Mexico FLN. Its members are working to understand and mitigate the flooding and debris flows that can follow severe wildfire, and to lay out best practices to mitigate them—after the fire, but also through pre-fire planning for post-fire impacts. Its efforts this spring included drafting an overview of burned area response policies and resources, and a field tour to assess the effectiveness of a range of erosion control methods. Many participants in the national Fire Networks Workshop expressed interest in this post-fire planning, so the learning from this will undoubtedly inform the wider networks.

Looking forward, the IPBN is exploring expansion into this landscape through

connections with pueblos. At a learning exchange in late winter, co-leads from the Yurok-Hupa-Karuk IPBN traveled to New Mexico to meet with people from two pueblos and start the conversations.



Participants in the spring Yurok TRES grind acorns into flour for soup. Regular fire supports food security in this landscape by keeping the acorn crop healthy. © TNC (Amanda Stamper)

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges and the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network support each other. Many indigenous cultures—including those in northern California—are fire-dependent. The Yurok TRES provides long-awaited opportunities to put fire on the ground in a way that supports revitalization of fire culture. Native people often hear about the IPBN through their participation in TRES—and vice versa. While the IPBN facilitates strategic planning, partnership building and intergenerational learning at the conceptual level, hands-on experiential learning at a TRES is often the first place where the rubber meets the road.



Smoke rises from a pair of controlled ecological restoration burns on the Ashland Forest All-lands Restoration Project during the Ashland TRES.

After the final day of burning during this TRES, there was an overnight smoke intrusion in Ashland when forecast winds failed to materialize. This became a teaching moment—complaints from the community were addressed in a piece in the local paper written by the mayor, executive director of the Ashland Chamber of Commerce and the forest division chief for Ashland Fire & Rescue (a FAC Net core member). The article addressed the source of the smoke, its health implications, and the rationale for using prescribed fire to prevent more severe fire (and smoke) issues later. *Photo: USFS (Don Boucher)*

## GETTING REAL ABOUT SMOKE

Another topic of growing interest in the networks (and beyond) is smoke. Several FAC Net and FLN members in the West are adopting a new approach to smoke outreach. The typical strategy has been to try to increase acceptance of smoke from controlled burns through carefully crafted messaging. On its own, this has not produced sufficient results—while people understand the value of fire, the smoke is still a real concern for about one-third of households nationally. So network members are now addressing that directly by providing practical information and resources—including HEPA filters—to

help sensitive populations mitigate the effects of wildland fire smoke. This is being done as a public service and also as part of a larger effort to create more social license for prescribed burning and managed wildfires.

Using the network to find out what works, test ideas and not reinvent the wheel, members in Ashland, Deschutes County, Flagstaff and Santa Fe now provide websites, videos, maps and resource portals for their communities. And sometimes the network helps even more directly: with fires burning this summer in Colorado, Santa Fe recently loaned its HEPA filters to their Colorado colleagues.

## LEVERAGING THE NETWORKS FOR BETTER POLICY

While PERFECT does not fund any government relations work, the partnerships and knowledge base built under the agreement are being used to drive change at a larger scale through network members' engagement in policy matters.

In New Jersey this spring, FAC Net members mobilized neighborhood ambassadors to weigh in on a proposed New Jersey Pinelands management plan with the aim of ensuring that wildfire safety is taken into account. They have also made progress advancing state legislation to improve the policy environment related to prescribed burning.

In Oregon, the state's Smoke Management Plan is up for revision, and a central element of the proposed changes is a provision that would give local communities greater flexibility to implement prescribed burning in and around the wildland urban interface if a proactive plan is in place to notify the public and provide them with smoke mitigation strategies. In central Oregon, FAC Net and FLN members created an informal coalition with local partners in air quality, public health, and state and federal forest and fire management, and developed a fire

and smoke information portal for the public that meets these conditions, providing real-time updates about smoke events, as well as a range of mitigation options. If the proposed rules are approved and adopted by state agencies, it would address a key barrier to increasing the scale of prescribed burning to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk to communities and firefighters, while also addressing public health concerns associated with short-duration prescribed fire smoke.

In Washington, members of the FLN and Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network used the relationships and credibility



The spring 2018 Chama TREX crew.

You can always tell a TREX team by the variety of colors of hard hats. Bringing firefighters from many different organizations for each event creates a lot of diversity in experience among participants, setting the stage for excellent peer-to-peer learning. Similarly, diversity in gender, ethnicity and background enhances the training and working environment and helps these teams be as successful as they are. TREX coaches and leaders are working very hard to make diversity, equity and inclusion an important core value of every event.

© Chama Peak Land Alliance (Caitlin Barbour)

they've developed over the years to organize a roundtable discussion with Governor Jay Inslee and other elected officials, state and federal agency representatives, and leaders from several nonprofit organizations. Held in conjunction with the national

workshop, the roundtable elevated conversations about community wildfire resilience, bringing learning from PERFECT networks to key audiences in a state that is currently at the forefront of learning to live better with fire.

### More Stories Online

- 9 New *FLN Notes from the Field* this spring (see issues 128-136 in the index):  
<http://conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/FireLearningNetwork/USFLNPublications/Pages/Index-FLN-Notes-from-the-Field.aspx>
- 27 weekly posts on the FAC Net blog:  
<https://fireadaptednetwork.org/blog/>
- 6 capacity solutions in the new *Lessons from TREX Coaches* series:  
<http://conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/HabitatProtectionandRestoration/Training/TrainingExchanges/Pages/CapacitySolutions.aspx>
- 3 handouts about using asset-based community development for fire adaptation:  
<https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/FireLearningNetwork/NetworkProducts/Pages/ABCD.aspx>

### Network Websites

<http://www.conservationgateway.org/fln>  
<http://FireAdaptedNetwork.org>  
<http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>



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