



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Chama TREX

April 30-May 5, 2018

Northern New Mexico / Southern Colorado

The southwestern U.S. has been in an exceptional drought recently, with record or near-record low snowpack across the region. As we started planning for the 2018 Chama TREX we knew there was a chance that the fuel conditions would make implementing prescribed burns tough—or impossible—come early May.

Sure enough, by the week before the TREX most of our federal land management partners had gone into Stage 1 fire restrictions, or were planning to, meaning that no prescribed burns could take place on federal land. Our county partners in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico were also considering putting restrictions in place. The fire season in some areas of New Mexico had already started, and concern in our communities was high. As our prescribed burning options narrowed, we kept our focus on remaining opportunities to burn and on planning a strong program of alternate high-quality training.

The dry weather ultimately prevented us from accomplishing any prescribed burns during the TREX—but the event was still counted as a success by participants. We were fortunate to have four TREX coaches at the event, along with knowledgeable partners in the region; together they provide a range of training and learning opportunities, sometimes pulling together details at short notice. Over the six days of the event, fire practitioners learned important skills and gained experience in hose lays, engine operations, firing techniques and radio communication. We also conducted a mock burn with the San Juan National Forest, working through all the steps of a burn without any fire so that trainees could practice their roles in the field.

The TREX crew also attended Wildfire Preparedness Movie Night, a

community event organized by FireWise of Southwest Colorado; hosted a community information session in Chama; toured a managed wildfire with the Carson National Forest to learn about the incident and resulting community impacts; and, again with partners from FireWise of Southwest Colorado, learned how to conduct home assessments. Despite the lack of live fire, participants were engaged and invested in the opportunities available, which made this TREX a great experience for all.



The 18 participants came from Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico, and included employees of nonprofit organizations, federal and state agencies, volunteer fire departments, and private entities. *All photos © Chama Peak Land Alliance (Caitlin Barbour, AmeriCorp VISTA)*



Above: Participants worked with partners from FireWise of Southwest Colorado to learn how to conduct home assessments.

Top left: On a tour exploring the effects of a managed fire on the Carson NF, the crew discusses impacts on a stream.

Bottom left: Everything but the fire: Chama TREX participants prepare for "ignitions" on a mock burn on the San Juan NF.

For more about the Chama TREX, contact:

Emily Hohman
emily.hohman@chamapeak.org

TREX are part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

For more information about PERFECT, contact Marek Smith at marek_smith@tnc.org.



An equal opportunity provider