

San Juan TREN

Southwestern Colorado
September 10-24, 2019

CRITICAL CAPACITY BOOST

In late September about 30 fire practitioners convened for the San Juan TREN, hosted in partnership with the San Juan National Forest. Although 2019 was an unusually slow wildfire season in the area, the San Juan NF typically faces a shortage of resources for prescribed fire during the important early fall window, as wildfire activity elsewhere in the nation draws personnel and other resources. By providing a short-term capacity boost during this key period, this TREN was intended to help mitigate that resource shortage and assist the forest with meeting its fall prescribed fire goals.

Initially based near Pagosa Springs, Colorado, the TREN participants were organized into three modules with an experienced TREN coach leading each one. The TREN began with a day devoted to getting familiar with the equipment and the local area, including several presentations on local ecology and collaboratives, a field tour, and scenario-based team-building exercises at a nearby unit that had been burned the day before.

ALPHA, BRAVO, CHARLIE

During the first week, the Alpha and Bravo modules supported prescribed burns on the Pagosa Springs and Columbine ranger districts while Module Charlie traveled two hours west to Dove Creek, Colorado, to support the Bureau of Land Management Southwest Colorado District for four days. During this time the module had to be fully self-supporting for all logistics, a last minute change of plans that was made possible by the well-equipped participants and cadre from The Nature Conservancy in Colorado and the Forest Stewards Guild who were able to pull together stoves, utensils and camping gear sufficient to spike camp in a rural area.

After a week, heavy rain and cooler temperatures on the Pagosa Springs and Columbine ranger districts suspended further burning, so the TREN crews were invited to assist the Bureau of Land Management with additional units near Dolores, Colorado. Within 24 hours the team fully remobilized to a new base near Dolores, and resumed prescribed burn operations the following day. The BLM provided numerous trainee positions, including burn boss (RXB2(t)) and worked to prioritize training opportunities on a less than optimal burn day.

The two weeks were then rounded out with a great burn in ponderosa pine. TREN assisted the Dolores Ranger District, with participants serving in firefighter and firing boss (FFT1, FIRB) trainee roles.



A restoration biologist from Nebraska patrols the line during a burn with the Forest Service.
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COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS

This TREN was made possible through strong collaboration between the San Juan National Forest and a wide variety of partners, including the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership, a collaboration of multiple nonprofit, federal, tribal and state partners focused on forest management and monitoring on the Pagosa District. This partnership assisted with recruitment, field trips and presentations. They also coordinated media outreach before, during and after the event; through these efforts the TREN was featured on the front page of the *Pagosa Sun*.



Participants discuss firing plans on the first burn day of the TREX.
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The highly qualified personnel and logistical support provided by the Forest Stewards Guild and the Colorado Program of The Nature Conservancy were also key to the success of this TREX. Both organizations are also key partners in the FLN, with Conservancy staff leading the Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative and the Colorado-New Mexico Borderlands Initiative, while the Forest Stewards Guild leads a range of work in the region, and developed the All Hands, All Lands Burn Team to provide important capacity across northern New Mexico.

Past TREX in the region laid important groundwork for the San Juan TREX as well, by demonstrating the ability of multiple agencies to burn and learn together, by building relationships between fire practitioners on and off the fireline, and by showing how a short-term capacity boost can be best utilized to achieve burn targets.

Burn Unit	Ownership	Acres
Brockover	San Juan NF	1,500
West Rim Pines	BLM	650
Pargin	San Juan NF	5,800
Boggy Draw Unit 19	San Juan NF	167
TOTAL		8,117

San Juan TREX Planning Partners

2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership
Bureau of Land Management
Chama Peak Land Alliance
Colorado Forest Restoration Institute
Mountain Studies Institute
San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
The Forest Stewards Guild
The Nature Conservancy—Colorado
USDA Forest Service—San Juan National Forest
Wildfire Adapted Partnership

Participant Organizations

Audubon Canyon Ranch
Bureau of Land Management
Chama Peak Land Alliance
Colorado Department of Public Health
Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control
Colorado Forest Restoration Institute
Elk Creek Fire Protection District
Fontenelle Forest
Mancos Fire Department
Mountain Studies Institute
The Forest Stewards Guild
The Nature Conservancy—Colorado
USDA Forest Service—Los Padres, Pike and San Juan national forests
West Metro Fire
and private landowners

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Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges 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 PERFACT, contact Marek Smith at marek_smith@tnc.org.

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