

Northeast Washington TRES: A New Landscape Hosts a Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

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By *Nikolaj Lasbo*
The Nature Conservancy, Washington

Local fire professionals came together in northeast Washington state in April and May to build skills and harness the power of fire for good in a Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES). This is the first time that this innovative training has been hosted in northeast Washington, building on five years of successful events elsewhere in the state.

By early May, 24 TRES participants and organizers had successfully engaged in live fire training opportunities with host partners, igniting controlled burns across 246 acres. TRES burns were hosted by diverse entities, including the Bureau of Land Management, Colville National Forest, Kalispel Tribe, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. These types of cooperative burns across different types of land ownership showcase that everyone has a role to play in fire management, from federal agencies on down to private landowners.

Washington's landscapes evolved with fire, and fire will always be part of the landscape here. During a prescribed burn, fire professionals use low-intensity fires to reduce vegetation, including dense shrubs and saplings, that could otherwise fuel an uncharacteristically severe wildfire. This creates healthier forests and grasslands with improved habitat for fish and wildlife and safer conditions for all of us.



"Using beneficial fire and putting fire to work again will be key as we learn from the past and adapt to better live with more fire in a warming climate," said Reese Lolley, director of fire and forest health with The Nature Conservancy in Washington. "This work is one way to accelerate and reconnect how to appropriately use and prepare for fire in communities across Washington."



Above: The Northeast Washington TRES began by assisting with an 80-acre burn on the Kalispel Reservation. Participants on this burn came from the Kalispel Tribe and Stevens County Fire Districts 1, 10 and 13.

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Left: Participants created a "black line" in preparation for a controlled burn on Bureau of Land Management land during the Northeast Washington TRES.

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PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Kalispel Tribe
Kittitas County Fire Districts 1 and 3
Lincoln County Fire District 1
Northport Volunteer Fire Department
Roslyn Fire Department
Stevens County Fire Districts 1, 10 and 13
The Nature Conservancy
USDA Forest Service
Washington Department of Natural Resources

The Northeast Washington TRES brings participants into a collaborative environment designed to increase shared stewardship and learning across agencies and communities. Participants are paired with qualified trainers during the prescribed burns, allowing them to practice safely using fire to restore forests and create safer conditions for communities.



Participants assisted the National Park Service on an early May burn near Kettle Falls. © Eric Kiehn

The TRES program is working to support and amplify an existing strong foundation of cooperation and partnership among prescribed fire practitioners and land managers in northeast Washington. TRES strives to enhance a cooperative burning model that meets the needs of diverse entities, including federal and state agencies, private landowners and contractors, tribes, academics and

MORE ONLINE

"Fighting Fire With Fire" (video, Washington DNR):
https://youtu.be/NQ-D_6GGKBM

"TRES in Washington" (Washington Rx Fire Council):
<http://waprescribedfire.org/trex>

Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan:
https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp_wildfire_strategic_plan.pdf?qjvugeb

20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Central and Eastern Washington:
<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/ForestHealthPlan>

international partners—while incorporating local values and issues to build the right kinds of capacity in the right places.

For example, in addition to enhancing fire training opportunities and relationships in northeast Washington between local fire professionals, the TRES team met with three private landowners who are enthusiastic about using fire and are requesting support to overcome barriers to put fire to work to meet their stewardship goals. These landowners may be hosts to future TRES events, creating local training opportunities that in turn support landowner and community goals.

Similar TRES events take place nationwide. In Washington, they are becoming more routine as the state and its partners implement the Washington State Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan and a 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan to restore the natural wildfire resilience of our forests and reduce wildland fire risk in response to local values.

"We're very proud to support this collaborative effort to conduct prescribed fires in key landscapes as well as the training benefits these opportunities provide," said Mike Norris, prescribed fire program manager for the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

For more about TRES, contact:

Jeremy Bailey jeremy_bailey@tnc.org
or visit <http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>

For more about TRES in Washington, contact:

Kara Karboski kara@washingtonrccd.org

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