Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration

Overview: January - June 2013

The Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration (PERC) partnership works through a well-established Fire Learning Network (FLN) that fosters collaboration in landscapes across the country, provides experiential training opportunities, and supports communication and public outreach about fire and restoration. Beginning in 2011, the FLN has also guided the targeted restoration actions conducted under the Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER) agreement modification. 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.

In short, the partnership works in dozens of particular places, with hundreds of individual people, but also at regional and national scales—and it makes the connections between those scales, and those people.
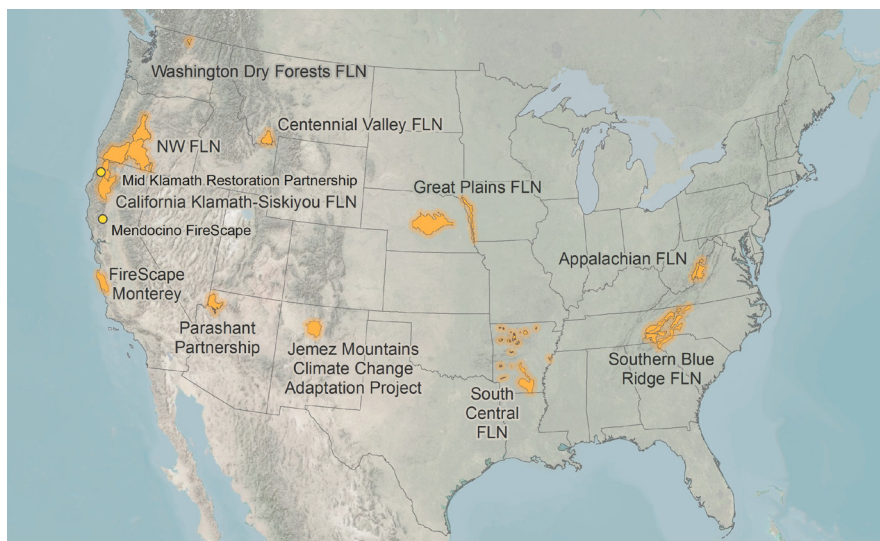
Landscape Collaboratives

The Fire Learning Network currently consists of 13 regional networks and demonstration landscapes (see map). The network spans the country geographically, and encompasses natural communities that range from woodland glades to shrub-steppe and from wilderness ponderosa to the wildland-urban interface of cities and towns. Some of the collaborative groups in the FLN are just beginning, and are working through the partnership-building and planning phases of restoration; others have matured into robust communities of practice, putting their years of work together into remarkable progress on the ground guided by continued learning and adaptive management.

In the first half of 2013, these networks and landscapes engaged in a typically wide range of activities. These included planning workshops, prescribed fire council conferences and plant monitoring refresher training; development of interpretive signage, brochures and a video, and screenings of a recently-developed film on fire; public tours of a wildfire site and volunteer work days; completion of vegetation analyses and installation of new monitoring plots. As always, the work of each landscape is driven by the needs, barriers and opportunities facing its partners.

Nebraska training exchange

Experiential Training

This spring, 112 practitioners took part in prescribed fire training exchanges built on the principles of integrated fire management. Integrating science and society with fire management technologies results in agendas designed to enhance fire use knowledge, skills and abilities as well as increase awareness of the ecological, social and economic roles of fire. Training exchanges are managed as incidents, and include live fire, classroom content and scenario-based field exercises.

FLN networks and landscapes active January - June, 2013

Washington Dry Forests FLN
Centennial Valley FLN
NW FLN
Mid Klamath Restoration Partnership
California Klamath-Siskiyou FLN
Great Plains FLN
Mendocino FireScape
FireScape Monterey
Appalachian FLN
Parashant Partnership
Jemez Mountains Climate Change Adaptation Project
Southern Blue Ridge FLN
South Central FLN

Key to the success of the training is the integration of professional wildland firefighters into a diverse group of participants. Basic NWCG courses were offered to 15 students to provide the certification needed to allow this. Involving numerous less-traditional practitioners in the prescribed fire training expands the capacity of the fire community, as well its ability to conduct fires effectively and with full social license. The range of partners served includes university students, biologists, ranchers and farmers, municipal firefighters, volunteer fire departments, sheriff's deputies, conservationists and private fire contractors as well as managers and practitioners from county, state and federal land management agencies.

SPER project in Ashland (OR) watershed

Targeted Implementation

Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency funding is allowing six landscapes to apply treatments that tie together work done on, or planned for, federal lands. Strategically placed treatments thus impact a large scale, for example completing work that protects a community's watershed. Others leverage landscape-scale restoration of priority forest types, building system resiliency. Relationships and planning developed through long-term work together in FLN landscapes set the stage for most of these projects.

FAC Learning Network pilot communities

Fire Adapted Communities

The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network—modeled after the FLN—was launched this spring when key stakeholders from eight pilot communities met for two days in Boise. The pilot communities are receiving financial, technical and peer network support to implement and innovate fire adapted community concepts and best practices. They facilitate local coordinating groups, develop and implement local work plans and share their learning with others in the network. These communities represent a diverse geographic, cultural and ecological cross-section of US communities at risk from wildfire. Hub organizations will work with the pilot communities, regional partners and existing networks, spanning bioregional, state or multi-state areas as appropriate, to facilitate learning across communities, focusing on in-person and interactive learning.

Integrated Outreach

Communication efforts are woven into and support network, training and implementation efforts. This takes many forms. This spring, for example, FLN landscapes have worked on brochures, signage and a video in support of the use of

prescribed fire; staff developed a set of wildfire messages and supporting materials; prescribed fire training events include opportunities for firefighters to help develop key messages and practice speaking with reporters, and local and regional papers ran stories; and two SPER project leads actively engaged reporters, resulting in several positive stories in local papers and a good fire story on NPR's *Morning Edition*. Communication among practitioners is also supported by network engagement with JFSP consortia and state prescribed fire councils and through the bi-weekly *FLN Networker* and Conservation Gateway website, a repository of information for the wider conservation community, through which many of the products of and lessons learned by members of the FLN are disseminated.