

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



Fire ecology field tour during Central Oregon TREX © Ricard Baques

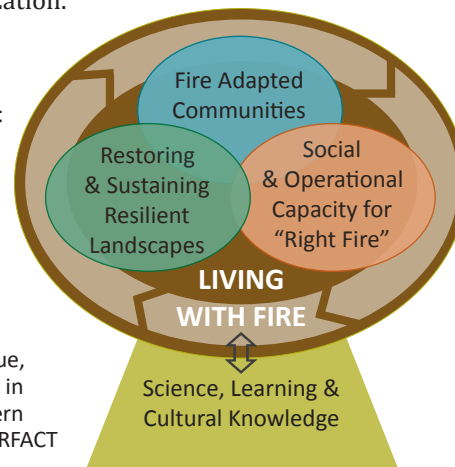
DELIVERING ON A VISION FOR A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH FIRE

This partnership works to restore our relationship with fire by helping us get to “right fire”—where good fire can do its necessary 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 goals in implementing the Cohesive Strategy, helping them develop the resources and relationships they need to succeed. We work in key places with individual people, and also at regional and national scales, by making connections between scales. This work is accomplished through:

- the Fire Learning Network (FLN), fostering collaboration for restoration and integrated fire management in landscapes across the country;
- the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC Net), which is doing the same with communities adapting to wildfire;
- Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) and cooperative burns, providing experiential training opportunities that integrate a range of people, places and aspects of fire;
- targeted restoration action and capacity-building under Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER); and
- the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN), supporting traditional burning practices and cultural revitalization.

Overlapping PERFACT Efforts for Greater Impact

These efforts—the FLN and those that it has inspired and incubated—are interconnected and continue to support each other. We and our partners are starting to see that our impacts are greater and results more durable where multiple overlapping and complementary efforts are directed. And as the strategies are becoming more interwoven, they are becoming more powerful. This is perhaps most strikingly true, for example, in the places where we are working in southern Oregon, northern California and northern New Mexico. In all of these places, virtually all PERFACT strategies are being used in synergy.



Highlights from Each Strategy: January-June 2017

FIRE LEARNING NETWORK

The FLN continues to demonstrate what’s possible when you bring people together across boundaries, both geographic and institutional, and what’s possible when you invest in relationships over the long term. Among the goals of the FLN this year was the creation of intentional opportunities for further developing relationships, fostering team cohesion and facilitating co-learning between regional network leads. The effort was led by the new FLN Director, Marek Smith, who joined the FLN staff after eight years as a regional network co-lead.



The California Klamath-Siskiyou FLN co-hosted a VFD training—and, for some of the 24 participants, a first experience on a prescribed burn. Such training builds cohesion for future burns, and important leadership and firefighting skills that will aid in local and regional wildfire response. © WRTC (Piper McDaniel)

At the annual leaders’ workshop, 20 FLN peers validated their shared vision of the network and developed ideas for what they will collectively advance and how they will structure and maintain the network to remain nimble and resilient. They identified important areas of focus, including improving and innovating ways to share FLN successes and lessons, expanding and diversifying participation in peer exchanges among networks, developing succession plans for regional network leadership, developing ways for more local partners and landscape leaders to touch the national network directly, and continuing to cultivate and invest in leaders who build durable institutions that will continue to collaborate to solve our nation’s fire problems.



“I’ve been waiting over 20 years for that burn to happen. Seriously – it has been on my fire management bucket list forever, so yeah, I was more than a little happy to see it finally happen!” Before this 600-acre prescribed burn at Stone Mountain State Park in March, the largest controlled burn in the park had been about 70 acres—which was another Southern Blue Ridge FLN cooperative burn. © NC Div of Parks & Rec (Ed Farr)

“Our involvement with FAC Net has radically changed the way we connect with others outside of our county. FAC Net affiliation gives our program credibility and invitations to move on to other counties and states.”

“The difference our participation in FAC Net has made cannot be overstated; we are more efficient, more effective and better able to succeed.”

“Communication is an essential element of being a prescribed fire professional in the 21st century and am proud that we are offering holistic training and tools to help support the next generation of fire practitioners.”

FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES LEARNING NETWORK

FAC Net’s guiding principle is that the best way to spread effective fire adaptation strategies is to connect peer practitioners. This is being done intensively, including through in-person work, with core members, and is now being spread further through web-based interactions with a growing group of affiliate members. In both cases, FAC Net weaves these relationships, providing forums for exchange and innovation, and—like the FLN—demonstrating what’s possible through collaboration and connections through a robust network.

The annual FAC Net workshop centered on a unique approach to netweaving. To facilitate connections and deepen members’ understanding of their bodies of work, members were asked to rate a set of FAC practices in their own work before coming to the workshop; ratings were based on the importance of a practice in their fire adaptation strategy, their investment in it, and the level of engagement they have in each practice. Data were then compiled into visual representations of “portfolios” for each person. Activities during the workshop facilitated insights about personal and regional strengths and opportunities—and ideas for future co-work and co-learning. Network leaders are using the information gathered in this activity to inform overall FAC Net strategy.



At the national workshop, in addition to exercises to explore and leverage member “portfolios” (*top*) skill sessions focused on engaging with diversity (*below*) and the community asset mapping approach being used by the FireScope Mendocino FLN.

© Jeremiah Osborne-Gowey; TNC (L. Rank)



At a training this spring New Jersey’s FAC ambassadors worked in teams to build comprehensive wildfire preparedness plans. © NJ Fire Safety Council (Bill Brash)

PRESCRIBED FIRE TRAINING EXCHANGES & COOPERATIVE BURNING

This spring TRES leaders and coaches worked together during a three-day workshop to kick off a new network to build and support the cadre that will take TRES to its next level of growth. The workshop formalized this core group of TRES leaders as the TRES Coaches Network, making a structure that will enable these leaders to share best practices and learn from one another about the mechanics of coordinating and delivering a TRES. It will also support TRES leaders who are not already well connected to the FLN and FAC Net become better integrated with overall network goals—and connections and resources. This will increase consistency and maintain high quality as the number of events increases.

In fact, the growth of the TRES strategy is already well under way. This spring saw eight TRES and cooperative burns—up from five last spring—in Nebraska, Iowa, Oregon, New Mexico and California. All told, 318 people gained valuable experience, while conducting 14,437 acres of burning for forest and grassland health, watershed resiliency, community protection and management of cultural resources. Planning for the fall season was also active, with eight TRES currently on the schedule.



Delighted, engaged landowners—like this first-time burner at the Loup River TRES this spring—are a sign of TRES success.

© Pheasants Forever (Ben Wheeler)



The Yurok TRES provided training for 24 local participants, who completed strategic burns for community safety and cultural resources. They also had a chance to work side-by-side with 35 CAL FIRE firefighters, an important relationship-building opportunity for the community. © Elizabeth Azzuz



Key to SPER success is developing strategic relationships. Partners from the Mid Klamath met with the CAL FIRE Director and his executive staff to discuss how the agency can better work with tribes and other local and regional entities to increase cultural and prescribed burning in California. © MKWC

SCALING-UP TO PROMOTE ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCY

SPER “right fire” pilots are beginning to wrap up an aggressive three years of work on their strategies, with the last actions to be completed this fall. Even before the final numbers and effects have been tallied, it is clear that the working hypothesis is valid: concerted efforts at overcoming remaining social and diplomatic barriers (including smoke and legal issues), a pulse of targeted implementation funding and support, all directed to the right partners in a place that has laid a good foundation of enabling social and ecological work, can result in breakthroughs in getting “right fire” on the ground. Prescribed burning is becoming common in all of the SPER landscapes and the use of natural fire starts is in discussion at two of the pilots—in New Mexico, significant funding for additional implementation has recently been awarded—and in the Klamath, this summer is seeing something partners have long been working toward: a wildfire being managed for resource benefit.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BURNING NETWORK

The IPBN is continuing work—on both a planning process, and work on the ground—begun last year. The Healthy Country Planning training taken last winter was applied in a community workshop in the Yurok-Hoopa-Karuk IPBN early in the year. As a result, “We are amazed. You come in here and facilitate two workshops, and now we have a plan that feels like our own.” Unlike typical conservation planning processes, which focus on natural and perhaps archaeological resources, the HCP process includes living culture as a valuable priority.

The goals of cultural perpetuation and fire use are also being advanced on the ground, through the Yurok TREX and through family-led burns that are facilitated by an IPBN equipment cache.

The network is also exploring areas for expansion, in places where PERFECT is already working. These include pueblos in the upper reaches of the Rio Grande watershed (where the New Mexico FLN, as well as TREX and SPER, are working) and tribes in Round Valley, a focal area of the FireScape Mendocino landscape.

“The networks are filled with dedicated, inspiring people working on similar issues through North America. The tools, ideas and conversation I have while at the workshops are invaluable to our continued success and work at home in our project area.”

Working Together to Amplify the Impact

By working on multiple strategies in the same place—or at several scales—the effect of each person, place and project is enhanced, and has opportunities to ripple outward and upward toward our collective larger goal and impact. The geographic overlap is strategically planned—as when holding the spring’s TREX in the Chama landscape to further SPER and FLN goals there. In some cases, the evolution is stepwise—as when the Washington Dry Forests FLN began adding fire adapted communities work to its portfolio to enable the landscape work they needed—until it begins to make little sense to distinguish between efforts there. Bridging strategies is key, and the work clearly benefits and accelerates as a result.

PERFACT networks also make sure people meet the right people, whether it’s a geographically distant peer or a key policy-maker or regulator. Again, this is planned—by who is invited to workshops, or through “you really need to talk to” introductions made by staff or network colleagues. Other connections are fortuitous (though still ultimately by design) as network members host workshops and other events that bring diverse practitioners and stakeholders together.

Much of the successful work this spring exemplified this kind of “stacking” and bridging of strategies.

In Ashland (OR), the FLN, FAC Net, SPER and TREX are all contributing to work



The Chama TREX completed burns identified as priorities by a SPER project—which in turn was working in a landscape selected as an important pilot in the Rio Grande Water Fund (in which the FLN is a leading partner). Work crossed the border into Colorado—where, on days not suitable for burning, the crews connected with FAC Net core member FireWise of Southwest Colorado and assisted in Wildfire Preparedness Days activities. “It helped us understand the value of assisting communities with efforts like felling trees, cutting shrubs and hauling slash—some communities with older residents can’t make fast progress on their own, but when there is additional capacity it increases the momentum for the effort.” © Chama Peak Land Alliance (E. Hohman)



“The work we’ve done with the FLN made it much easier for us to keep the momentum rolling in the aftermath of the 2016 wildfires. We never considered backing off in 2017.”

that is protecting the municipal watershed. The SPER pilot included work on dealing with using fire, including smoke issues—and perceptions—to enable more prescribed burning and more ownership of when, where and how to use fire, which was applied to a TRES this spring. “The TRES demands and enables us to amplify and clarify our communications about fire and smoke in the neighborhood in the most meaningful ways possible.” This year, several days of burning took place on the property of a landowner who is a FAC Net member, a partner in numerous forest restoration projects and an early adopter of the FLN approach in the area. “His positive experience will resonate in the community of the Rogue Basin in ways that an NGO voice cannot carry.” The TRES team hopes to accomplish something similar with a vocal landowner in the immediate Ashland area next year, and some possible candidates have been identified.

Washington FAC Net and FLN members jointly hosted an “After the Fire” workshop, expanding on work begun by the Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition when their community experienced severe fire. By working together, they brought in a wider range of expertise—from business leaders to a member of the Southwest Burned Area Learning Network—than

either might have alone. Workshop participants articulated how important fire adaptation practices are in the “during” and “post” phases of wildfire, as well as the perception that this work belongs to disaster response or recovery “others.” By identifying them as critical competencies for community resilience and adaptation practitioners, the first step in meeting that need has been taken. This work is also a good example of concepts that can be built on and refined by the networks, then spread to the large practitioner community.

Work with the FireScope Mendocino FLN this spring has led to exploring the expansion of the IPBN to this landscape. A Community Asset Mapping project, led by community engagement expert Jana Carp, identified the Round Valley focal area as a good candidate for community-based fire planning; such planning would engage the six tribes



The use of sand table exercises to vividly engage residents in wildfire awareness and preparation is spreading like—well, wildfire—through the networks. © TNC (Marek Smith)

PERFACT Numbers in a Nutshell: January-June 2017

During this period PERFACT supported:

- 12 Fire Learning Networks encompassing 71.3 million acres
- 16 community-based Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network core member organizations in 15 states, and 3 state-wide networks (and mentoring another 2 state-wide efforts), while engaging about 90 individuals and organizations in 24 states as affiliate members
- 7 Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges and 1 week-long cooperative burn event that together provided training and experience for 318 people while treating 14,437 acres with fire
- national workshops for the FAC Net, FLN and TRES leaders, as well as 138 local and regional workshops and learning exchanges that enabled partners and stakeholders to learn, plan, implement, monitor and adapt together and to share knowledge among communities and landscapes

on the Round Valley Indian Reservation as well as private ranch lands and possibly portions of the Mendocino NF. The work here is another example of a method being applied and tested in one place that the networks may be able to leverage to other places and scales.

In May, PERFACT leadership, including the agency point of contact, met for three days to review and refine leveraging strategies, based on critical review of the year and lessons learned. The even greater focus on synergy is reflected in the PERFACT work plan for the coming year and in individual FAC Net and FLN member work plans.

More Online

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



Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together (PERFACT) is a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Lynn Decker at ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.

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