

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

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 work in key places with individual people, and also at regional and national scales. We also leverage the connections between those 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 (TRES) 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);
- the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN), supporting traditional burning practices and cultural revitalization; and
- the Burned Area Learning Network (BALN), bringing people together for pre-fire planning for better post-fire restoration.



Nearly 90 people, many of them local, took part in the fall Klamath River TRES hosted by the Western Klamath Mountains FLN. For two weeks they worked on their skills and learned from each other—while getting fire on the ground in places that matter to communities along the river. Their 406 acres of burning was spread over 43 units that ranged in size from half an acre to about 100 acres; units were strategically placed to protect infra-structure and communities from wildfire, and to renew culturally important resources that depend on fire.

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Stacking Efforts for 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.



RECENT PERFECT WORK

In the second half of 2016, PERFECT supported:

- 11 Fire Learning Networks encompassing 60 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 75 individuals and organizations as affiliate members
- 3 Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges, 3 cooperative burns, a wildfire training exchange and a family burn training event in coordination with the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network; together these provided training and experience for 230 people while treating 2,441 acres with fire
- more than 140 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

Over the course of 2016, PERFECT partnership work and training events also leveraged more than \$22 million* in additional funds for treatments and other actions that will build forest, watershed and community resilience.

* awarded in calendar year 2016—some of the funds are for multi-year projects

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 PERFECT strategies are being used in synergy. In the forests—and especially in the municipal watershed—around Ashland, concerted FAC Net and FLN efforts may have been working even better than projected. At events this fall intended to address public concerns with smoke, they found little such concern, which they believe may have been due to the care with which burning—including

some supported by SPER and TREX—and related public outreach has been conducted. In the Klamath Mountains, PERFECT work is now so integrated, it is difficult to tease the threads apart: FLN planning underlies the general strategic thrust, which is tightly bound to FAC goals. Implementation includes TREX and SPER-supported burning that builds local fire management capacity while completing fuel treatments for community safety, and to meet some of the cultural fire needs identified by the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network. PERFECT is also working in northern

New Mexico, from the upper reaches of the Rio Grande watershed to the forests surrounding Santa Fe. TREX and SPER burning this fall included WUI fuels treatments led by FAC Net strategies and people, and watershed resiliency treatments under the Rio Grande Water Fund, a major project in which the FLN leads from The Nature Conservancy are driving partners. The New Mexico FLN is also the birthplace of the Burned Area Learning Network, now spreading to FLN landscapes in California and Washington, and the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network began scoping expansion to New Mexico this fall.

All of these efforts have leaped forward in the last two years, with the infusion of SPER support. In addition to putting fire on the ground, with its immediate impacts on forest resilience and community safety, these efforts are building really robust constituencies of people who support fire, and workforces who can implement it.

This supports our belief in a densifying strategy—that stacking efforts works. It is also clear evidence that our long-term strategy of building and supporting relationships works. PERFECT is unusual in this focus on funding relationship capacity-building—yet it is how we consistently accomplish more and build towards bigger things faster.

Raising Fire Leaders

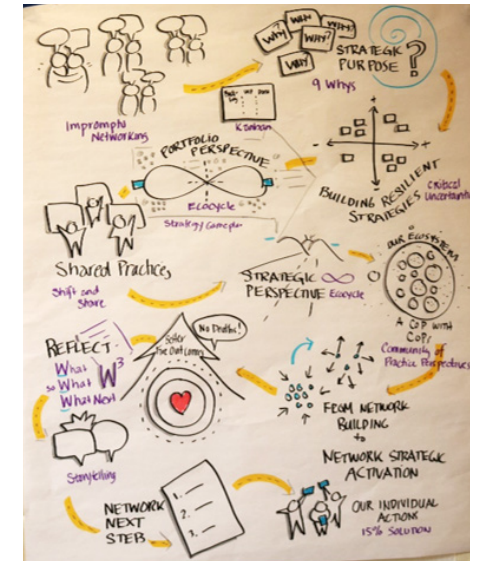
PERFACT is also helping bring a new cadre of fire leaders to the fore. We mentor, support and otherwise enable people to have opportunities to develop and contribute like no other institution is doing. This takes a range of forms: Through its liaison structure, FAC Net provides mentoring—and netweaving—that is tailored to each member's

Flat Ranch Burn Introduces Fire to Preserve, Community to Prescribed Fire

FLN partners in Idaho (with help from a Burn Boss from the Southern Blue Ridge FLN) conducted the first-ever burn on TNC-Idaho property this fall. An important aspect of the event was public outreach, with the community invited to ranch headquarters for a picnic and time to talk with staff about this fire, and the role of fire in the landscape.

Left: © TNC (Mike Norris)

Below: © TNC (Robert Unnasch)



Workshop process diagram from the FAC Net communities of practice workshop in December. Locally based FAC practitioners are taking the lead in the network's nationwide COPs—and in helping the network adapt these topic area sub-groups to meet member needs

MEMBER VOICES

“I didn’t really know what to expect, but I can definitely say that I didn’t expect such a powerful 10 days that was going to alter my perception and goals for my future in fire.”

— WTREX participant



Top photo: NPS (Kelly Martin)

Below: © UC Extension (Lenya Quinn-Davidson)

Longer quotes from participants in the Women in Fire TREX are collected in an *FLN Notes from the Field* posted at <https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/FireLearningNetwork/USFLNPublications/Pages/Notes-WTRET-2016.aspx>

needs. Its Network Builders Club is a community of practice in which peers learn from and assist each other as they build state-wide networks. The TREX Coaches Network has been under active development this fall, and its first members—those identified as the rising coaches and TREX leaders who will take the strategy forward—have been invited to the first train-the-trainer workshop in the spring.

Women have traditionally been an underutilized resource in fire management. This fall’s Women in Fire TREX (WTREX) addressed that this fall by taking the established, successful TREX model and applying it specifically to women in fire leadership. Having this many women, of all levels of experience, on an incident provided an opportunity—almost unique in the professional experience of many there—to learn from other women. Reversing the gender ratio typical of fire incidents, and explicitly talking about gender issues, was also a powerful experience for the women and men alike who took part in this innovative experience. Demand for the event was high—only about half the applicants could be accepted—and interest in another WTREX is even higher, so this is clearly an offering that will be repeated.

Diversifying the Fire Workforce

In addition to embracing women in the fire workforce, TREX and the cooperative burns supported by PERFECT welcome tribal members interested in cultural burning, regulatory agency staff, non-profit organizations, new burners, students wanting field experience, private contractors, ranchers and others. This diversity enriches the TREX experience for all, but perhaps more importantly, builds both the size of, and the breadth of experience in, the local, regional and national workforce.

At the Klamath River TREX this fall, members of local tribes made up almost a quarter of the participants, with local NGOs, landowners and contractors also very strongly represented. This is building their capacity to complete the treatments their communities need—and improving response to the inevitable wildfires, especially as they begin to work more closely with Forest Service staff on TREX. In New Mexico, cooperative burns are also strongly focused on bringing new groups into the workforce, for example by engaging Youth Corps and veterans in the Black Lake burning this fall. In the Chama Peak landscape, ranch managers and VFDs brought important local knowledge to the mix.



Across Cultures, Across Generations

At the Spanish-language TREX, the international crew had a round robin of fire learning exercises with fifth and sixth graders from Albuquerque at Cottonwood Gulch. © Forest Stewards Guild

Moving to Implementation

TREX events also target people with strong motivations for getting good fire on the ground, and hosts and leaders that are grounded in the work of FLNs. These are places where stakeholders representing real needs for fire—for the landscape and for communities—are deeply invested in the planning, implementation, monitoring and plan adjustments. As a result, they don’t ask “Can we burn?” but rather “How can we burn?” And so the needed burning gets done—while individual units are sometimes deferred, TREX are only very rarely cancelled. For example, this fall, the Klamath River TREX went forward even though California was under a state-wide burn ban due to drought. Earlier



A Movement that Works

FAC Net increasingly operates like a movement—but members also get a lot done on the ground. While FAC Net doesn't directly fund (and so, doesn't track) mitigation work that results from participation in the network, members leverage the organizational capacity, learning and peer support they get from the network to help garner funding for mitigation. © UT DFFSL

relationship-building with CAL FIRE, along with planning that ensured a wide variety of burn units to choose from, allowed the organizers to meet with the permitting agency and agree upon cooler, north-facing units that could be safely burned under those conditions. Shortly after that, torrential rains broke the drought—but made many areas too wet to burn, threatening the WTREX. The organizers delayed the start by a day to accommodate those with disrupted travel, and again, by focusing on opportunities rather than barriers, and by having identified in advance a range of potential burn units over a wide area, were able to host an event that was successful on all fronts. In New Mexico, PERFECT projects completed more than 1,850 acres of burning this fall, through the Spanish-language TREX and cooperative burns in Black Lake and Chama. Investments in relationships—with landowners, agencies and practitioners—were key to developing projects that succeed because they address priority needs of each of the many stakeholders.

Building a Movement

We are now seeing evidence on several fronts that our intent to build a movement for good fire is taking root. When devastating wildfires struck the Southeast late this fall, numerous FLN partners reported that the relationships developed among agencies and practitioners over the years contributed significantly to their ability to respond. A focus, already underway, on elevating the role of fire adapted communities in these landscapes will be accelerated, and will be able to spread through channels already in place.

MEMBER VOICES

During our unprecedented fall wildfire season, “we believe that the partnerships forged over the decade of FLN work greatly improved communication/sharing of information on wildfires that crossed agency boundaries or that had resources from other units. Not only did the FLN improve working relationships, but agency suppression decisions were influenced by the recognition that fire needs to be on the landscape.”

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges and cooperative burning modeled on TREX are also taking on a life of their own. We are aware of planning underway this fall for at least two spring training exchanges that will be led and hosted by TREX alumni, but without direct support from PERFECT. The online TREX tool kit, some personal mentoring, and the new TREX Coaches Network are supporting this organic growth and spread of TREX.

The FAC Learning Network has rapidly moved toward becoming an organically growing, but guided, movement—as originally envisioned in its theory of change. This fall, a Network Systems Analysis and discussions at a workshop for leaders of network communities of practice (COPs) provided opportunities to assess where the network is, and how to make adjustments for maximum impact. The network analysis showed a tightly connected group whose staff liaising strategy has been central to building network relationships—but as members deepen their connections, their reliance on staff decreases, an excellent outcome, and these core members are now situated for collective action. When COP leaders gathered in December, they quickly realized that their planned agenda—and the COP model as a means of connecting within

the network—needed to be revised. Network members and staff realized that the network is undergoing a phase shift, from primarily a connection and sharing network to a joint-action network, and worked together to make the changes needed to support that.

More Online

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



Culturally important resources like food and basketmaking materials rely on “good fire,” which people are reclaiming through TREX in northern California. © Stormy Staats



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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