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.

The goal of this partnership is to help us all live with fire—with fire adapted human communities, resilient natural landscapes, and the social and operational capacity to flourish in a challenging, changing fire environment.

Our efforts are rooted in collaboration and integrating the best available science and cultural knowledge with a strong emphasis on co-learning and adaptive management. We work by:

- Using the Fire Learning Network and the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network together to create a system of Learning Networks to address the complete scope of landscape and community integrated fire and landscape management issues;

- Focusing on training and development for durable capacity-building, risk management, prescribed fire knowledge and skills, bridging organizational boundaries, and public-private collaboration; and

- Engaging at all levels, from local to national, to strengthen the framework of enabling conditions needed to accelerate the pace of restoration and community resilience at targeted sites.

Fire Adapted Communities

Restoring & Sustaining Resilient Landscapes

Social & Operational Capacity for "Right Fire"

LIVING WITH FIRE

Science, Learning & Cultural Knowledge

RECENT WORK

In the second half of 2014, PERFACT supported:

- 13 Fire Learning Networks (FLNs) that encompass more than 30 landscapes and 66 million acres;

- 17 Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC LN) hub organizations working with pilot communities in 13 states;

- 4 Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) that provided training and experience for 202 people while treating 1,084 acres with fire, as well as planning for 8 spring 2015 TREX; and

- 5 Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER) implementation projects completing treatments that complement existing and planned federal projects.

PERFACT staff at The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC) guide these efforts, help build networks among them, and ensure that learning is captured and shared. Staff facilitated eight FLN and FAC LN workshops, as well as nine wildfire season after action reviews for communities in the Klamath landscape. By phone, email and in-person visits, they guided FAC LN hubs in planning and implementing actions to expand their impact.

To communicate about our work, we also updated the Conservation Gateway website to improve access to information about TREX and *Notes from the Field* covering many aspects of PERFACT work, produced a bi-weekly newsletter that goes to over 600 partners and practitioners, and published an all-new L*earning Networks Field Guide*.

Exploring and launching new efforts and methods is also important. This fall, that included starting on a third SPER effort, aimed at helping three large landscapes--in California, New Mexico and Oregon--reach enabling conditions for "right fire" within three years, and increasing connections with tribal partners to expand the integration of cultural knowledge in projects. In the FAC LN, most of the hubs have begun beta-testing a new FAC Self-Assessment Tool, developed by the network to help communities take themselves through a comprehensive assessment; once refined, this will be shared widely.

The wide range of work done under PERFACT informed Mary Huffman's writing of "Making a World of Difference in Fire and Climate Change," which appeared in *Fire Ecology* in December. The FLN was also one of 10 generative networks in *Connecting to Change the World: Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Impact*, a primer on network theory by Peter Plastrik, Madeleine Taylor, and John Cleveland.

More Online

Fire Learning Network — http://www.conservationgateway.org/fln

Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network — http://facnetwork.org/

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges — http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges

Learning Networks Field Guide — http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/FireLearningNetwork/USFLNPublications/Pages/FLN-Field-Guide.aspx

"Making a World of Difference in Fire and Climate Change" (*Fire Ecology*) — http://fireecologyjournal.org/docs/Journal/pdf/Volume10/Issue03/090.pdf

On the Ground: Samples of Work under Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities

Fire Adapted Communities

FAC hubs engage communities to work locally, and share nationally.

In Washington, the "After the Fire" toolkit that was developed earlier in the year was widely distributed during the summer fire season. The toolkit provides simple ways for post-fire preparedness information to be shared during the "teachable moment" that occurs during a fire incident. The Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition's post about this on the FAC Learning Network's blog was the most-read post of the year.

In New Jersey, network partners are adding a FAC section to Sustainable Jersey, a certification program that helps municipalities "go green, save money and sustain quality of life." They have drafted standards for certifiable actions (such as Firewise; CWPPs; Ready, Set Go!; Fire Safe Council) and a model Fire Safe ordinance for municipalities to adapt and adopt. This work has required working with a wide range of partners—which has been extremely time consuming, but also rewarding, especially as the product will affect the whole state.

Our FAC efforts in Georgia are centered in Towns County, where November 3-9 was proclaimed wildfire awareness week. Partners talked FAC on the radio, flashed messages on electronic bill boards, taught high schools classes, and visited elementary schools with Smokey Bear and messages about the dangers of bad fire and the benefits of good fire. This hub's work is also spreading outward—they gave FAC presentations to commissioners and civic groups in four adjacent counties and are in the process of developing FAC Citizens Coalitions in two of those counties.

Social & Operational Capacity for "Right Fire"

In addition to work directly supported by PERFACT, the FLN lays the foundation for conservation and restoration work across wide landscapes. From partnership-building to the development of plans and models for prioritizing work, the FLN promotes landscape resiliency. For 2014, network and landscape leads reported that their FLN work facilitated or otherwise furthered treatments on over 282,000 acres, and leveraged over $9.2 million in funding.

Restoring & Sustaining Resilient Landscapes

The Klamath River TREX joined local fire management capacity-building, targeted WUI treatments to support local FAC efforts, and exemplary outreach through social media. Using Facebook pages that had become local go-to information sources during recent fire seasons, they kept the community posted, shared stories about the people of TREX, and answered concerns in near real-time.

In New Mexico, a second Black Lake TREX was held this fall. The intensive public engagement that is part of this effort is paying off. A local resident who was highly skeptical of WUI burning last year—he was quoted in the paper as having purchased his own firefighting equipment to protect his house from the TREX burn—this year worked as a volunteer public information officer. He and others "traplined" during the event, circulating throughout the community to share information and listen to concerns. He is also talking about collecting photo-point data to track recovery and change at the site.

The three locally-hosted TREX in New Mexico and California met their goals of building local fire-management capacity, with participation that was overwhelmingly local (65-92% in-state) and overwhelmingly non-federal (62-93%). Training that meets NWCG standards is often difficult or impossible for many of these participants to access.

In the Centennial Valley (Montana), partners are working on watershed prioritization to set management recommendations. This year they sampled late-season flows and analyzed the results. A strong ability to predict climate resilience from a few simple attributes was found. The methodology is intuitive to stakeholders, who are increasing the consideration of climate effects when prioritizing work. Private grants will allow a research team to look at ways to seasonally store water in the alluvial aquifer to improve late-season flows.

Central Appalachians partners expanded the use of prescribed fire to several new locations, conducting collaborative burns on state, National Park Service and local water utility lands for the first time this fall.

The Trinity Integrated Fire Management Partnership (California) SPER project completed about 115 acres of fuels reduction work, mainly in WUI. This included 22 acres of pile burning that required working with 26 landowners. These treatments will help facilitate and control about 250 acres of Rx burning planned for the fall.

Science, Learning & Cultural Knowledge

The Northern California Prescribed Fire Council held a workshop on "Managing Fire for Resource Benefits in California." The December event brought together nearly 200 fire managers, tribe members, non-profit and federal agency staff, researchers and professors for presentations, discussion and networking.

In New Mexico, managing the after-effects of large wildfires is becoming increasingly important. FLN leads have helped establish the post-fire flood mitigation working group for the Rio Grande Water Fund, in which the FLN is a key founding partner. The FLN is also helping the Southwest Fire Science Consortium define research needed in this area.

v. 28 Jan 15