Southern Blue Ridge FLN

Partner Agencies & Organizations

Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists
Georgia Department of Natural Resources—State Parks
Georgia Department of Natural Resources—Wildlife Resources Division (Game, Non-game)
Georgia Forest Watch
Land Trust for the Little Tennessee
National Park Service—Blue Ridge Parkway; Great Smoky Mountains NP
North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
North Carolina Forest Service
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
The Nature Conservancy—Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
Towns County (Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network)
USDA Forest Service—Chattahoochee-Oconee NF (Blue Ridge RD, Chattooga River RD, Conasauga RD)
USDA Forest Service—Cherokee NF (Unaka RD)
USDA Forest Service—National Forests in North Carolina: Nantahala NF (Cheoah RD, Tusquittee RD, Nantahala RD); Pisgah NF (Grandfather RD)
USDA Forest Service—Southern Research Station
Western Carolina Alliance
Western Carolina University

Grandfather RD / December 13, 2013

Recent Success Stories

We are not only burning more acres, but we're doing it more efficiently. Increasingly, multi-owner burn units are seeing prescribed fire.

FLN partners recently initiated a fire management program at Lake James State Park, in North Carolina's Central Escarpment landscape. Working cooperatively with the NC Forest Service and park neighbors, the park has now placed about 300 acres of park and private property under prescription. Nearly 250 acres have already been burned in 2014, and several hundred more will be placed under prescription in coming months. In Georgia, partners had two simultaneous 2,000-acre conservation burns about five air miles from each other. Partners in the South Mountains landscape in North Carolina conducted a 1,200-acre prescribed burn at Skull Knob on part of the state-owned area split between South Mountains Game Land and South Mountains State Park. These burns are clear evidence that the partnerships are starting to make large collaborative and multi-ownership burns more routine, helping to restore fire-adapted systems on a larger scale.

Work in Progress

Having a CFLRP project in our midst will increase prescribed burning and other management practices by more than 40,000 acres in the Central Escarpment landscape, with synergy between the FLN and CFLRP—which have essentially the same partners—facilitating resource sharing and other opportunities. The CFLRP has the potential to restore the fire-adapted forest ecosystems and benefit a variety of native plants and wildlife. And in this and other landscapes, we are widening our burn season and therefore finding new opportunities to put fire on the ground.

A Big "Aha!"

Even after decades of using prescribed fire, we've failed to change trajectories in heavily fire-suppressed ecosystems. All we've done is to push leaf litter around with low-intensity, dormant-season fires. We are now fundamentally rethinking fire severity, fire effects and seasonality—and it's working!

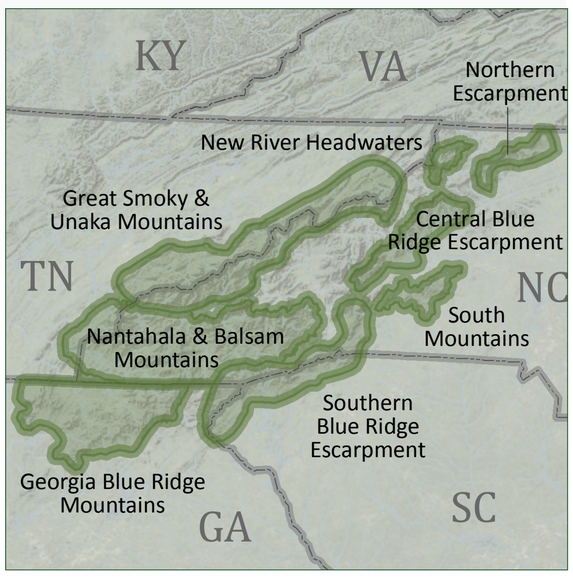
Left: They all look the same in Nomex! Staff from NC State Parks, NC Wildlife Commission and TNC work together at The Nature Conservancy's Bluff Mountain Preserve in North Carolina. *© TNC/Margit Bucher*

Above: Crowders Mountain State Park burns into the night during a cooperative project between North Carolina State Parks and NC Forest Service. Fires are burning later as a result of not rushing to wrap it all up before dark. *© NC State Parks/Jonas Hansen*

Beyond Our Boundaries

Our ecological burn prioritization tool has been used on multiple landscapes, and by several agencies, in the SBR Network. It has also been exported to regions beyond SBR, including to the Central Appalachians FLN. This simple model allows managers to prioritize burns by helping identify where we should be putting fire, based on historic and current vegetation, rather than falling back on where fire is logistically the easiest to apply.

At their workshops, SBR partners don't just hear about restoration, they see it for themselves, as during this May 2013 field trip discussion led by Nathan Klaus (GA DNR) and Mike Brod (USFS). *© TNC/Evan Raskin*



Meeting Challenges

We seem to have many challenges, but none that we haven't been able to work with so far.

For example, our patchwork ownership means that we have lots of boundary issues to deal with. But partnerships are strengthening, so we are seeing many of those agency boundaries disappear. Many boundaries are with private landowners. In these cases, the support of our state forestry agencies is critical, because the states have additional authorities that allow them to work with these landowners. In fact, having a state forestry agency negotiate with private landowners even allowed a new state park to be added to our landscape.

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