



# Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

## Blue Suck Controlled Burn Douthat State Park

Bath County, Virginia

March 2014

In the Central Appalachians FLN, 36 staff from five agencies conducted the partnership’s first-ever burn in Douthat State Park on March 24 as part of their work under Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER). The burn was conducted to control encroachment of undesired trees species and promote regeneration of oaks, pitch pines and

fire-dependent species such as Table Mountain pine. The 175-acre Blue Suck burn—named for a prominent waterfall—took place near one of the most popular trail sections in the park; with 250,000 visitors a year at the park, the effects of the burn should provide excellent forest restoration outreach opportunities in the coming months and years.

### Participating Agencies

- The Nature Conservancy
- USDA Forest Service
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Virginia Department of Corrections



Burn boss Sam Lindblom (fire manager for TNC VA) led the morning briefing covering safety precautions, communications, burn objectives and assignments. *Marek Smith/TNC*



Division B holding crew held its briefing after the main briefing. This team was responsible for monitoring and holding fire lines on the southern edge of the burn. *Marek Smith/TNC*



Staff ignited the burn by hand with drip torches, after members of the ignition team—Ryan Klopf (VA DCR), John Moncure (USFS), Nikole Swaney (TNC) and Tyler Urgo (VA DGIF)—went over the ignition plan. *Marek Smith/TNC*

**Fire is as much a part of the natural processes as rain. Like rain, fire can be beneficial or damaging depending on its strength and duration. Our goal is to use controlled burns to safely reintroduce fire into ecosystems for their restoration and enhancement.**  
*Al Cire, Resource Specialist, Virginia State Parks*



*Top:* Members of the fire team monitor burn progress in a section of pine-oak heath habitat. *Bottom:* View of the Blue Suck burn from across Douthat Lake, a poplar feature in the highly visited state park. *Katie Shepard/VA State Parks*



Nikole Swaney and Sam Truslow welcomed perfect mop-up weather—two inches of snow the day after the burn. *Sam Lindblom/TNC*

### For more information, contact:

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The Fire Learning Network is supported by *Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration: Landscapes, Learning and Restoration*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information about the FLN, contact Lynn Decker at [ldecker@tnc.org](mailto:ldecker@tnc.org) or (801) 320-0524.



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