



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

July 2011

FireScope Monterey Big Sur Station, CA Sand Table Exercise

On July 26, FireScope Monterey put on its first “Fire 101 and Sand Table Exercise” event at the multiagency Big Sur Station. The objectives of the day were to enable FireScope participants to:

- build their basic knowledge of fire behavior and the fire environment;
- improve their understanding of safety considerations during fire operations; and
- increase their understanding of fire decision making and local decision space during fire events.

The event was also designed to engage stakeholder participation and learning in a way that advances collaborative problem solving in the local landscape.

Activities for the day were designed by the USFS Monterey District fire staff, CAL FIRE, Mid-Coast Fire Brigade and other fire-knowledgeable community members. Participants role-played decision-making on large fires, studied fire fatality statistics, observed how different local fuel types burn, and learned to make basic fire behavior predictions. The day culminated in a sand table exercise in which fire staff demonstrated, in miniature, fire fighting operations that would take place on a local fire as they transitioned from initial to extended attack. The group finished the day with an enhanced shared understanding of firefighting decision-making, and some of its limits in the local fuels and terrain.



Retired CAL FIRE Captain Joe Rawitzer and USFS Fire Management Officer Mike Strawhun demonstrate how different local vegetation types produce flames of different lengths

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Above: Participants engage in basic fire behavior prediction for a fire in short grass, using flagging tape to represent the flame lengths and walking at the speed they predict for fire spread

Below: FireScope Monterey participants engage in role play to explore the kinds of decisions that take place during wildfire events, while Forest Service District Ranger Sherry Tune uses a marker to draw the connections among the different decision-makers

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For more information about FireScope Monterey, contact:

- Jeff Kwasny** jkwasny@fs.fed.us
 USDA Forest Service
- Butch Kronlund** bpkronlund@aol.com
 Coast Property Owners Association
- Gordon Johnson** gjohnson@ridgeline.net
 California Wilderness Project

Participating Agencies & Organizations

- Big Sur Land Trust
- CAL FIRE
- California Native Plant Society
- California State Parks
- California Wilderness Project
- Coast Property Owners Association
- Los Padres Forest Watch
- Mal Paso Creek Property Association
- Mid-Coast Fire Brigade
- Monterey-San Benito Range Improvement Association
- Monterey Fire Safe Council
- Residents of Big Sur, Carmel Valley and Palo Colorado
- Santa Lucia Conservancy
- Sierra Club
- The Nature Conservancy—Fire Learning Network
- University of California—Davis
- University of California—Santa Cruz, Landel-Hill Big Creek Reserve
- USDA Forest Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Ventana Wildlife Society

For more about using sand table exercises for shared learning, contact:

- Mary Huffman** mhuffman@tnc.org
 Fire Learning Network

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 or (801) 320-0524.

