



FIRE LEARNING NETWORK

2013 Highlights

The Fire Learning Network consists of hundreds of partners in 26 large landscapes across the country collaborating to do what is needed locally to promote the resiliency of fire-adapted ecosystems and the safety of the communities that are a part of them. The efforts needed to do this range from building, integrating and sharing the science and local knowledge needed for adaptive management decisions, to public outreach that builds support for those actions, to training that provides the workforce for them, to the relationships that support the safe and efficient implementation of restoration treatments.

A complete cataloging of FLN actions and their outcomes would fill volumes. A few representative examples are highlighted here.



Central Appalachians FLN leads organized a field tour for The Nature Conservancy's national fire managers' workshop. Several people said that the tour—which was informed by lessons from years of FLN experience—was the best TNC tour they had taken part in.

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“New partners **energize the network** with new ideas and enthusiasm. Time and time again, partners emphasize the value of sharing information—what works and what doesn't—as well as having the opportunity to deepen relationships with neighbors.”

Workshops for gathering colleagues & working together

FLN landscapes and regional networks held or co-hosted more than 20 local and regional workshops, symposia and partner meetings in the second half of 2013, including:

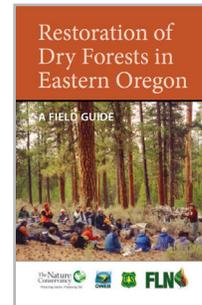
- FLN Open Standards planning workshops for FireScope Mendocino and the Western Klamath Mountains Restoration Partnership, the latter of which ended abruptly when the Dance Fire, the first of a complex, started virtually in town;
- a workshop to kick off the new Georgia Blue Ridge landscape, in partnership with the Towns County Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network pilot community;
- several meetings between the Karuk Tribe, Forest Service and CAL FIRE to facilitate development of a Local Area Operating Plan under the Stafford Act;
- a grasslands and grazing symposium in support of the Sage Grouse Initiative in the Centennial Valley of Montana;
- partner meetings in the Loess Hills to plan and coordinate training and burning in the area;
- a series of stakeholder workshops to gather information to inform the development of a regional conservation plan for shortleaf pine; and

- a two-day state-wide conference on fire adapted communities in Washington, which led to plans for an in-depth community workshop in Yakima this spring. The Central Appalachians FLN also provided significant support to the “Wildland Fire in the Appalachians” conference, which was particularly valuable when federal employees were unable to take part due to the government furloughs.

“As a mature learning network, regional and national partners are aware of our partnerships and **seek out our learning and experience....**The continued use of field tours showing different stages of restoration is critical, as is having developed complete species lists for restoration sites that serve as a guide for other sites as they move down the road toward ‘What and when is it restored?’”

Tools that capture & share learning

In the Northwest FLN, the methods described in the new field guide (*see caption*) are being incorporated into the prescriptions of forest restoration projects on the Fremont/Winema National Forest. The “Individuals, Clumps, and Openings” methodology is the result of extensive data collection of historical forest conditions, and a mature learning network.



In the Central Appalachians and Southern Blue Ridge FLNs, work continues on monitoring protocols, burn prioritization modeling, landscape mapping and assessment tools, and local adaptation of vegetation modeling. A hallmark of work in this region is the use of consistent protocols and methods across broad landscapes, and the spread of tools from one landscape to others, often in partnership with the Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers & Scientists.

The Central Appalachians FLN published a forest structure and monitoring protocol to guide controlled burns and other forest management.

With support from the FLN, Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy, the *Eastern Oregon Dry Forest Restoration Field Guide* was published in July, and about 1,200 copies distributed to various units of the Forest Service and to all dry forest collaborative groups in Oregon, university and government research bodies, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and Klamath Tribes.

Making connections between people, places, scales

“Our partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Forest Service on the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network and **the synergy** between that and the FLN is paying off at many levels. Not only are we learning about and helping advance the practice of FAC throughout the country—which is an amazing opportunity—but we are thinking about how those lessons apply to our local work and the goals of fire adaptation that are central to what we do.”

The FLN is ultimately about bringing people together to get things done. At its best, people step outside what is comfortable, and get things done that had not previously been possible.

For example, in Montana, people from a wide range of organizations—including several traditionally anti-management groups—have nearly completed a landscape proposal for part of the Gravelly Mountains landscape, with implementation maps, desired future conditions, treatment descriptions and anticipated outcomes. It is expected to be approved in January.

In the Western Klamath, networking with CAL FIRE through the prescribed fire council and local fire safe councils has yielded increased support for prescribed burning, with CAL FIRE writing multiple permits for council and prescribed fire training exchange burns, which allowed for longer burn windows and broader environmental prescriptions.

Top: Field tour in the Centennial Valley.
Bottom: In northern Georgia, the Towns County FAC pilot community and Georgia Blue Ridge landscape are working together to join previously unconnected fire constituencies.
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The FLN supports “a grassroots and formative **dialog among unconventional partners** about how to restore healthy fires to some of the most remote landscapes in the West. I see ranchers, tribal representatives, environmentalists and local governments realizing that through this collaborative they can and will effect meaningful change on public land-use planning.”

Tangible progress

FLNs across the country continuously make tangible progress in ways large and small. In the second half of 2013, this ranged from a partnership with Ecology Project International in which 139 high school students from across the country modified three miles of fence and conducted fuel reduction treatments on four acres, while learning about the Centennial Valley, to partners in the Central Appa-

“Launching the regional, multi-partner Shortleaf Pine Initiative **would not have been possible** without having been involved for years with the FLN.”

lachians conducting thousands of acres of controlled burns together, to the training and WUI treatments of the northern California prescribed fire training exchange.



“In 2013, the FLN connected our local fire organizations to an incredibly talented and knowledgeable national network of fire practitioners that provided key information and on-the-ground support to prescribed burning and cutting edge local fire planning efforts. **Organizing the TREX was a sea change event for the community.** Seeing six smoke plumes going up around the valley in one day I believe inspired many in our community who see fire suppression and the cessation of cultural burning as the largest impact to tribal cultural, ceremonial, and subsistence use of fire and fire dependent resources to believe that we can legally **restore the role of fire in this place.**”

Fire Learning Network is supported by *Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration (PERC): Landscapes, Learning & Restoration*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Lynn Decker (ldecker@tnc.org).