



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Contract Prescribed Fire Modules Add Capacity in the Appalachians

Virginia—North Carolina/Tennessee—
Georgia/South Carolina
Spring 2016

A frequently identified barrier to prescribed fire implementation is insufficient capacity. To help mitigate that challenge, the Conservancy's Virginia chapter, with Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER II) support, contracted with the nonprofit Wildland Restoration International (WRI) to provide a four-person fire module in the spring of 2015. The module helped prep and implement controlled burns on 2,942 acres in the Heart of the Appalachians landscape and prepped another 1,344 acres for upcoming burns. The success of this crew led the chapter to again contract with WRI, this time through a participating agreement funded by a USDA Forest Service Supplemental Wildland Fire Hazardous Fuels (WFHF) project, to provide a four-person module for the spring of 2016. With additional funding from the Forest Service Region 8, two more modules were supported in the Southern Blue Ridge FLN.

In 2016, the three modules—based in Virginia, North Carolina/Tennessee and Georgia/South Carolina—contributed to over 20,000 acres of burning that spanned state, federal, local and private lands. In 2017, current plans are to deploy three modules to work in Kentucky, South Carolina and Virginia, with additional modules and states possible.



From top: The original WRI crew in 2015. Crew training on "Buffalo Blower," spring 2016. The Central Module at work on a burn on the Arnold Air Force Base in Tennessee.
© WRI (James Pilsmaker (2), Ryan Kennelly)

The Conservancy bid for crews with certain specifications to ensure a highly qualified and effective team.

- NWCG Single Resource Crew Boss
- NWCG firefighter type 1 (Squad Boss)
- 2 NWCG firefighter type 2
- Equipment: 2 4WD Vehicles, 2 chain-saws, 2 leafblowers, 1 brushcutter, 8+ hand tools.

Northern Module

- George Washington and Jefferson NFs, state and private lands
- 1,538 acres Rx fire
- 1,560 acres wildfire management
- 29 days of fireline prep
- 5 partner agencies

Central Module

- Cherokee, Pisgah and Nantahala NFs, state and private lands
- 7,036 acres Rx fire
- 26 acres wildfire management
- Southern pine beetle forest resiliency monitoring
- Fuel reduction in public use areas

Southern Module

- Chatahoochee NF, Sumter NF, state and private lands
- 10,747 acres Rx fire
- Hardwood reduction at last remaining low mountain seepage bog in Georgia
- 4 partner agencies

For more information, contact:

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or visit:
<http://wildlandrestoration.org/>

The Fire Learning Network (FLN) and Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER) are part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

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They were willing to work, to teach, and to learn during their time here, and they were a crew I could count on to handle any responsibilities given to them. The WRI module was there to help during every one of those burns, providing leadership to our FFT1 trainees while also taking advantage of training opportunities for their crew. Having even four extra people to help burn was invaluable for our program during a time when we were struggling to meet minimum staffing requirements on prescribed burns. The fact that two crew members were FFT 1 qualified and one was also an EMT was another bonus.

FMO, Cherokee NF-Tellico RD