



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Donation Provides Cache of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Support TREN Capacity

Fall 2016

As Lynn Decker told Dave Livermore, Director of the Utah chapter of The Nature Conservancy, “we’re going to need to buy some pants if we want to continue to build conservation capacity with a diverse workforce.”

Long-time supporters of the FLN, Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREN) and other PERFECT strategies—and a great example of the One Conservancy ethos—the Utah chapter recently made a donation that has allowed TREN to acquire a cache of personal protective equipment (PPE) to outfit 20 people. Working with diverse crews means that many TREN participants do not own the gear needed to take part in burning being conducted under NWCG standards. Nor can many afford to purchase it, since outfitting a single person with fire-resistant clothing and a fire shelter costs in the neighborhood of a thousand dollars. But bringing these people into TREN is essential not only to the quality of a TREN experience, but also to the overarching goal of expanding the capacity for the good fire needed to support resilient natural landscapes and human communities.

In the past, TREN organizers have had to borrow or rent PPE to outfit those who



Participants in the 2016 Spanish-language TREN were the first to use the new TREN cache of personal protective equipment. © TNC (Jeremy Bailey)

needed it—a process that was sometimes expensive and almost always complex and time-consuming. Having a reliable supply of gear on hand allows that energy and money to be directed to otherwise improving participant experiences and expanding the reach of TREN.

This fall the TREN team researched suppliers and ordered the gear: 20 fire-resistant shirts; 23 pairs of fire-resistant pants (to make sure the sizes covered everyone); 20 helmets, packs, fire shelters, gloves, safety glasses. Also ordered were five practice shelters—fire shelters are single-use, only opened in an emergency, so the practice shelters allow people to practice deploying them, and get tested doing so.

The gear was then sent to New Mexico for its first use, at the Spanish-language TREN. (While many of the participants in this TREN are fire professionals from other countries, their gear does not always match U.S. standards.) Safely

outfitted, the 18 participants in that TREN completed more than 800 acres of prescribed burning—including some with Fire Adapted Communities Learning Networks partners—and got two days experience on a wildfire as well.

Since then, some of the cache has also been used on cooperative burns elsewhere in New Mexico, and stands ready to support other TREN and strategic cooperative burning in California, Oregon, the Great Plains and wherever else TREN are found over the next several years.

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREN) 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.

For more information about PERFECT, contact Lynn Decker: ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.



An equal opportunity provider

Personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for each fire practitioner:

- fire-resistant pants and shirt
- helmet
- fire shelter
- backpack for gear (and fire shelter pocket)
- leather gloves
- safety glasses
- leather work boots

Thanks to this donation from TNC-UT, TREN now maintains a cache of PPE with all of this equipment (except boots).

Because TREN involves a training component, it also requires several “practice shelters” for participants to practice deploying. Firefighters must demonstrate proficiency in this annually.