



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Cascadia Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX)

Central Washington
September 24 – October 6, 2017

The first TREX in Washington drew 18 firefighters from local, state and federal agencies for two weeks of training, learning, partnership-building, cross-agency relationship coordination and, yes, putting fire to work.

The Cascadia TREX was organized by a partnership between the Washington Prescribed Fire Council, Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition, U.S. Forest Service (Wenatchee River RD) and The Nature Conservancy to bring important prescribed fire training to Washington. Project development began two years ago under the “Fire-Resilient Communities and Landscapes in Chelan County Pilot,” a multi-faceted proposal to restore fire-adapted land-scapes, support fire-adapted communities and increase safe and effective wildfire response in Chelan County.

Partners across the state are working towards a more resilient Washington. And that includes fire practitioners who have the knowledge, expertise and qualifications to implement safe and effective prescribed burning to meet forest restoration and community safety goals. Washington is not known for its prescribed burning, but recent back-to-back record-breaking



Firing boss trainee on the McCartney Creek burn

© Chris Brandon

fire years have highlighted the forest health issues within the state, the impacts these altered forests have on Washington’s communities, and the need for forest restoration and firefighter and community preparedness. The Cascadia TREX brought together people interested in increasing their qualifications—and in using prescribed fire as a tool to address those challenges.

The core Cascadia TREX crew had members from eight agencies in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Over the course of 12 days they implemented prescribed burns on forests and grasslands of Central Washington, working across four landownerships, and partnering with those local landowners and federal and local agency staff. The crew brought their varied backgrounds and experiences to learn from one another in the classroom, in the field and through fire operations. They also learned about the broader picture of fire, about local community engagement, how to communicate effectively with the public and media, and the role of fire in the surrounding landscape.

Through most of the two-week event, participants integrated with the U.S. Forest Service Wenatchee River Ranger District, supporting their work and receiving training from fire staff. They gained experience working in the steep and complex terrain of the District

Technical Highlights

The Cascadia TREX took place in central Washington, primarily within the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF, from September 24-October 6, 2017. The 18-person TREX crew integrated with the Wenatchee River RD crews for burning within the Forest and for a burn on National Park Service land near Stehekin. The TREX crew also burned on a Nature Conservancy preserve and private land outside the community of Roslyn.

Treatment and training highlights:

- The crew burned 419 acres on USFS, NPS, TNC and private lands over the course of 12 days, including a 12-acre private land burn adjacent to the City of Roslyn in coordination with local resources
- A one-day workshop and field day focused on fuels monitoring and site assessments for burn plans and complexity ratings



Aerial view of the Roslyn Ridge prescribed burn, with the City of Roslyn—which had recently been threatened by the Jolly Mountain wildfire—in the background © John Marshall

on four very different burn projects. Through the Forest’s partnership with other agencies in the state, one TREX crew was sent to burn with the National Park Service in Stehekin, which sits at the north end of the 50-mile long Lake Chelan in the North Cascades, accessible only by boat, floatplane or hiking in.

During the second week, crews had the opportunity to work on two burns on private lands. One was on a Nature Conservancy preserve in the Moses Coulee area to restore an old agricultural field to native shrub-steppe. After being rained out the first attempt, crews reorganized and tried again with the support of local resources.

The second private-land burn was near the City of Roslyn, which just weeks earlier had been under threat from the Jolly Mountain Fire—a fire that had put the Cascadia TREX, let alone the particular burn unit, very much up in the air. But with the changing weather—and the diligent work of local partners—the work was able to go forward. With support from local fire agencies and other cooperators, the TREX crew conducted a prescribed burn adjacent to the Roslyn Urban Forest, less than a



A crew member works the interior of the Roslyn Ridge burn. © WA RC&D (Kara Karboski)

mile from downtown Roslyn. It was an important burn, for both restoration, and to begin the work needed to protect the community from future fires.

From its inception, the Cascadia TREX was built on partnerships and relationships. Without the support of these partners at every stage, the training and the burns accomplished during the two weeks would not have been possible. This is an important lesson those who participated in this TREX took home: lighting the match is just one step in a long process. Prescribed fire relies on the partnerships and relationships established before the burn just as much as the burn itself.

Core TREX Crew Organizations

Chelan County Fire District 1
 Chelan County Fire District 3
 Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue
 National Park Service
 Oregon Department of Forestry
 U.S. Forest Service—Caribou-Targhee National Forest
 Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
 Washington Department of Natural Resources

Supporting Local Partners

Chelan County Fire District 3
 Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition
 Cle Elum Fire Department
 Douglas County Fire District 1
 Grant County Fire District 13
 Kittitas County Fire District 6
 Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue
 North Cascades National Park
 Rimrock Meadows
 Roslyn Fire Department
 The Nature Conservancy
 Washington Prescribed Fire Council
 Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network

For more information, contact:

Kara Karboski

kara@washingtonrcd.org

Hilary Lundgren

hilary@fireadaptedwashington.org

The Fire Learning Network is 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 PERFACT, contact Lynn Decker: ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.



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v. 3 Nov 17 / Kara Karboski et al.