



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Ashland TRES

Using Mild Fire as an Antidote to Worsening Wildfire

May 7-18, 2018

The 2018 Ashland TRES was hosted at Southern Oregon University, and sponsored by the Fire Learning Network and partners in the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project (AFR)—The Nature Conservancy, City of Ashland, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and Lomakatsi Restoration Project. The Conservancy's Oregon/Washington fire manager, Amanda Stamper, led as incident commander.

BUILDING A BETTER FIRE FUTURE

The Ashland TRES brought together more than 50 fire practitioners and leaders, meteorologists, local media, documentary videographers, and journalism students from the University of Oregon. The TRES joined forces with the AFR communications team, generating outreach and engagement through the AFR website and Facebook page and local paper. TV coverage included interviews with Amanda Stamper, Jon Bailey (burn boss from the Conservancy's Maine chapter) and Yvette Leecy (timber sale officer of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs).

This year's training emphasized building relationships and improving communications across organizations to improve burn implementation and

achieve desired outcomes. TRES teams spent four days burning in the Ashland Forest Resiliency project area, adding capacity to Forest Service and contract crews from Grayback Forestry to accomplish more acres of burning. Similarly, TRES crews supported a large multiday burn on lands managed by the Medford District BLM. Multiple ignitions teams worked simultaneously, applying mild fire on a strategic ridge and along a travel corridor above the private lands near Thompson Creek in the Applegate Valley. TRES crews also



© TNC (Amanda Stamper)

TRES is helping to shape a new community role in managing fire, bridging divides by providing opportunities to work together to return the role of fire in the ecosystem.



Left: Fire sisters Katie Sauerbrey, Yvette Leecy, Aisha Wiig and Amanda Stamper pause during burn operations in the Ashland Forest Resiliency project.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the success of Ashland TRES. Leaders cultivate an environment where NWCG-qualified wildland firefighters from NGOs, private industry, federal agencies, state and county governments, structural fire departments and universities are welcomed for their contributions to the whole, and come together to "share the flame." This year, 50 percent of the incident management team and 37 percent of participants were women. There were tribal members from Oregon and California, Latinx participants speaking both English and Spanish, and people identifying as LGBTQ. In addition, the Northwest Fire Science Consortium created a scholarship program that enabled those with financial constraints to participate.



Multiple ignitions took place on City of Ashland and Forest Service lands in the Ashland Forest Resiliency project area. These burns delivered a pulse of “drift smoke” into the city of Ashland during the evening and night, an example a state-defined “smoke intrusion.” There is an ongoing effort to revise Oregon smoke management regulations to not penalize prescribed burners for unexpected smoke intrusion events in communities for which communications on fire events—and smoke mitigation information—is made available, as it has been in Ashland.

credit: USFS (Don Boucher)

burned private lands adjacent to BLM land in the middle Applegate, using drones and time-lapse photography to document burning over time and from a bird’s eye view.

METEOROLOGICAL SUPPORT

The National Weather Service office in Medford rotated meteorologists in to work with the TREC team. They provided on-site weather briefings, provided expert advice regarding smoke movement and dispersion, and traveled alongside crews to observe the burns and compare forecasts to actual observations. This NWS investment allowed their staff to get on-site experience with fire partners, to better understand prescribed burning, improve communications with fire professionals, and accomplish training for incident meteorologist

qualifications and professional development, as well as providing opportunities to build relationships with staff from local organizations.

MONITORING, DIALOG AND PERSPECTIVE ARE KEY TO LEARNING WHILE BURNING

The burns conducted during the TREC met both fuel reduction objectives and ecological goals, including retention of the legacy trees that predate the era of fire exclusion. While progress may seem slow, and acreage burned modest, these are first-entry burns with heavy fuel loading. Tom Dooley (the Conservancy’s forest program manager for South Carolina) helped provide perspective on this, noting that the large-scale burns in his state, covering a thousand acres or more, are often fourth- and fifth-entry burns which allow a quicker tempo during ignitions. Ashland Forest Resiliency partners were pleased with the outcomes of the 2018 Ashland TREC, and the progress made toward fire regaining its role in this landscape.

Left: Kara Baylog (Oregon State University Extension) helps make sure fire stays within the lines in the Ashland Forest Resiliency project area. © TNC (Amanda Stamper)



Participant Organizations

- Applegate Partnership
- Ashland Fire & Rescue
- Audubon Canyon Ranch
- Bureau of Land Management
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Cultural Fire Management council
- Frostburg State University
- Key Peninsula Fire Department
- Lomakatsi Restoration Project
- Medford Fire Rescue
- Nevada Division of Forestry
- Oregon State University
- Oregon Woods Inc.
- Sustainable Northwest
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of Washington
- USDA Forest Service
- Western Environmental Consultants

Participants came from 11 states—California, Colorado, Indiana, Maryland, Maine, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Washington and Wyoming.

For more about the Ashland TREC, contact:

- Darren Borgias
dborgias@tnc.org
- Amanda Stamper
amanda.stamper@tnc.org

For more about the TREC strategy, visit <http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>

The Fire Learning Network and Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREC) 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 PERFACT, contact Marek Smith at marek_smith@tnc.org.



An equal opportunity provider

LEARN MORE

Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project (AFR)
<https://www.ashland.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=17428>

AFR on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AFR.Project/>

“Fire Training Helps Ashland Watershed” (KOBI-TV)
<https://kobi5.com/news/77157-77157/>