



## Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field



### A Workshop to Remember: Southern Blue Ridge FLN Holds Its Ninth Regional Workshop May 2014

The superlatives were flying at the 2014 SBR FLN workshop. The meeting site in Cashiers, NC could not have been better. The region (the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment) is home to incredible biodiversity and 45 percent of the area is in some type of conservation ownership. The field trip to Jocassee Gorges Wildlife Management Area was exceptionally beautiful, fun and a great learning experience. Even the weather was perfect—in what is the wettest part in the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains. But as with all FLN workshops, it was the people who made it all worthwhile.

In all, 89 people attended, including a number of new partners. The workshop was hosted by FLN'ers from a variety of groups working in the SBR Escarpment, which spans parts of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. One outcome of the workshop was increased cohesion and enthusiasm for working together among these escarpment partners, including the U.S. Forest Service, Greenville Watershed, South Carolina State Parks and The Nature Conservancy.

The SBR FLN has been meeting for nine years now, expanding steadily in terms of geographic footprint and participation. Informal conversations and presentations indicated that the Network has fostered relationships that have significantly increased the number of multi-agency and cross-boundary burns, and increased the acres burned. Crews and equipment are available and better able to seize opportunities to burn. With only 7-10 good burn days in the spring fire season, this has made a big difference.

Some common themes emerged from presentations, the field trip and breakout group discussions at this year's workshop:

- Burn operations: How aggressive should we be in using fire to restore ecosystems? When is patience called for vs. bold action? What is the role of growing season burns? What are some of the risks and opportunities related to multiple-day burns? What is the right fire return interval to control hardwood resprouting? To promote Table Mountain pine regeneration?
- How can we in the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment increase the social carrying capacity for yellow pine restoration in a temperate rainforest that contains a great deal of seldom-disturbed climax forest?
- Addressing the opportunities and constraints related to rare animals (salamanders, some avian species) and fire restoration
- Increasing regional capacity for fire management through interagency burn teams, etc.
- Managing for multiple objectives: recreation, hunting, rare species, bird diversity, fuels reduction, tourism, etc.
- Improving interagency prioritization and coordination to facilitate true landscape-scale management

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### Participating Organizations

Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D Council  
Clemson University  
Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers & Scientists  
Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources  
Greenville Water  
Land Trust for the Little Tennessee  
National Park Service  
North Carolina Forest Service  
North Carolina Natural Heritage Program  
North Carolina State Parks  
North Carolina State University  
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission  
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
South Carolina Forestry Commission  
South Carolina State Parks  
The Nature Conservancy—Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
USDA Forest Service  
Western Carolina University  
Western North Carolina Alliance



Participants enjoyed learning opportunities at the Jocassee Gorges WMA photos TNC/W. Fulks

**Read more:** A post about this workshop is on the Grandfather Restoration Project (Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP)) blog: <http://grandfatherrestorationproject.wordpress.com/2014/06/02/learning-about-fire-in-the-southern-blue-ridge-3/>

The Fire Learning Network (FLN) is part of the *Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration: Landscapes, Learning and 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 or (801) 320-0524.



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