



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Third Annual Nor Cal TREX October 20 – November 1, 2015



The Nor Cal TREX team burned in a variety of fuel types, including this forested area on private land in Hayfork (*top*). They also brought fire back to this white oak woodland on a ranch near Hayfork (*center*), which historically experienced frequent fire but hadn't been burned in many years.

Public hiking/biking trails were used as firelines for burns on BLM land near Redding (*bottom*). TREX participants took every opportunity to talk to passersby about the need for controlled burning, and they found the public to be enthusiastic and grateful for their hard work.

Photos: Lenya Quinn-Davidson

As crews for the Northern California Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (Nor Cal TREX) assembled for a two-week burn assignment, other TREX teams that had been working for the previous three weeks around the nearby communities of Happy Camp, Orleans, Somes Bar and Weitchpec were just wrapping up. Those crews had mostly been focused on burning around homes and neighborhoods to create defensible space, but the Nor Cal TREX would be different, including a wide diversity of ecosystems and ownerships. Nor Cal TREX crews burned on private, tribal, Forest Service and BLM lands, migrating from the coastally influenced Klamath River corridor to the forests and rangelands of Trinity County and then to the xeric hills west of Redding. During the two-week event, they burned remnant prairies, white oak woodlands, mixed-conifer forests, black oak-ponderosa pine stands, and chaparral—a true sampling of the diverse northern California landscape.

The Northern California Prescribed Fire Council was the primary host of this TREX. The Council is a venue for practitioners, state and federal agencies, academic institutions, tribes, coalitions, and interested individuals to work collaboratively to promote, protect, conserve and expand the responsible use of prescribed fire in Northern California's fire-adapted landscapes.

Controlled burning is inherently complex, and as land managers scale up their use of this important tool, cooperation and planning become increasingly important. Mobilizing burn teams for weeks at a time takes committed leaders, landowners, participants and firefighters, as well as the agencies and organizations that support them. Increased burning also requires better coordination and communication around air quality, as burners must be able to share the airshed and work together to enable treatments across the landscape. The TREX program is leading the charge on this new model of cooperation, engaging diverse stakeholders in both planning and implementation. For the Nor Cal TREX, burning was coordinated among numerous agencies and other burn teams during the fall burn season to maximize the benefits of fire while minimizing smoke impacts to local communities.

The NorCal team began their two-week assignment in one of the most remote communities in the Lower 48: Weitchpec, the home of the Yurok Tribe. Famous for their basketry and salmon fisheries, the Yurok people still have access to their historical cultural knowledge of fire use in this region. Thanks to intergenerational teaching traditions within the tribe, fire use

knowledge has been shared from one generation to the next for millennia. The Yurok (and other local tribes) are capable burners and hosted the first few days of the TRES learning and burning curriculum.

For many of the participants, this was the first time they had worked with communities that are adamant about bringing fire back to their lands. This is true not only for the tribes in the Klamath Mountains, but also for a smattering of very rural towns and villages throughout the region that understand the value of having fire as a tool to restore their forests and protect their communities.

The NorCal TRES kicked off with fire management field trips and presentations from local burners. Participants learned about the important role that fire plays in preparing culturally important plants such as hazel, bear grass and tanoak trees, and met scientists and researchers who are finding innovative ways to integrate traditional ecological knowledge with western science. In Trinity and Shasta counties, participants met with community leaders, heard presentations from revered fire scientists, and got to know the landscape in field trips with fire ecologists and land managers. In these ways, the Nor Cal TRES balanced hands-on burning with many other modes of learning and networking.

By the time the crews were finishing up their last assignments of mop-up and patrol, they had moved their Incident Command Post three times and burned on seven different ownerships (using fire on seven of their eleven operational days). In all, the crew completed 240 acres of controlled burning, and met the objectives for the burns as set out in the plans. The TRES also provided position task book evaluations for 10 Firing Bosses, 5 Burn Bosses and another 20 firefighters in the positions of Firefighter Type 1 and Type 2, Fire Effects Monitor and Engine Boss.

Nor Cal TRES participants had many positive things to say about the event. One participant noted that “the training opportunities and the chance to burn in multiple unfamiliar veg types were fantastic and everything I was hoping for. The quality of the people both on the IMT and the attendees was extremely high. I appreciate the chance to meet and learn from such a diverse group.” Another said “the learning environment was awesome! I loved the presentations, the diverse participants, and all the experiences involved...The organization and ICT were great. I think this is a challenging program and the organization was as good as it could be considering the unpredictable nature of prescribed fire. Overall, a very, very positive experience!”

The Type 3 Incident Management Team that led this two-week burn team was also extremely happy with the success of the crew, the dedication of the hosting landowners and agencies, and the contributions of the volunteers who donated their time and equipment to make these good fires possible. Nor Cal TRES leaders are already working together to plan next year’s training.

For more information about the Nor Cal TRES, contact:

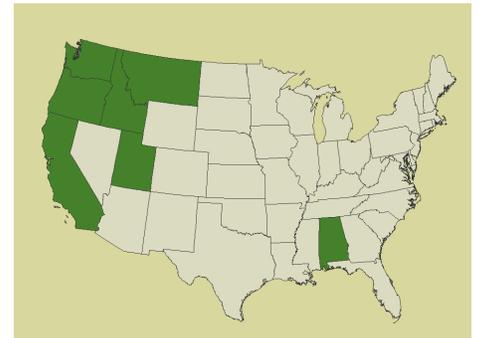
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For more about the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council, visit:
www.norcalrxfirecouncil.org

For information about other Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges, visit:
<http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>



Yurok host Elizabeth Azzuz pointing out Indian tea (yerba buena) to TRES participants during a field tour. Photo: Lenya Quinn-Davidson



While many of the Nor Cal TRES participants were from Northern California, adding to the local capacity to manage wildland fire, the experience was made richer by the diversity of the crew. The 40 participants came from seven U.S. states and also included two practitioners from Spain.

The Fire Learning Network (FLN) and Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TRES) 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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