



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Ashland Prescribed Fire Training Exchange Gets Under Way

Ashland, OR—May 2016

A **bluebird day** marked the opening of the Ashland Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX) on May 9. More than 40 participants from around the country—and from England, Mexico and Spain—gathered at Southern Oregon University, their Incident Command Post for the next two weeks. Assembled in a classroom that morning were a wide variety of representatives from state, local, federal and private agencies, including professional fire fighters, both wildland and structural; the local nonprofit organization Lomakasti and contractor Grayback Forestry Inc.; students and scientists; and local citizens drawn by their interest in the benefits of prescribed fire. There, this diverse group met the Type 3 Incident Management Team for the two-week event.

After an introduction from Incident Commander Tom Murphy, TREX leader Jeremy Bailey and the Fire Management Officer for The Nature Conservancy's Oregon Chapter, Amanda Stamper, the Ashland TREX turned to a series of presentations from local agencies, scientists, a fire weather meteorologist and private landowners. The presentations provided participants with insight into Oregon laws and permits for controlled burns, local fire ecology and weather, historic and local anthropogenic burning practices and land management programs. A highlight was an introduction to Ashland's cutting-edge watershed management program, the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project (AFR), which Mayor John Stromberg drew special attention to. During this orientation, a platform for discussions was constructed, and the air was filled with discussions about the importance of prescribed fire—culturally, environmentally and economically.

The complexity of both the challenges and benefits of prescribed fire is inherent in controlled burns, and all TREX address these challenges and facilitate the opportunity to develop creative solutions to the growing

Participant Organizations

Ashland Fire & Rescue
Atira GST Inc.
Bureau of Indian Affairs—
Southern Paiute Agency
Bomberos Voluntarios (Mexico)
Bureau of Land Management—
Medford
Dorset Fire and Rescue
(England)
Grayback Forestry
Guanajuato Volunteer Fire
Department (Mexico)
Jackson County Fire Department
(Oregon)
Key Peninsula Fire Department
(Washington)
Loamakatsi Restoration Project
Management of Environment
(Spain)
Oregon State University
Oregon Woods Inc.
Orting Valley Fire and Rescue
(Washington)
Pottawattamie County (Iowa)
Sinar Mas (Spain)
Siskiyou Permaculture (Oregon)

The Nature Conservancy—
Maine, Oregon, Utah chapters
USDA Forest Service—Gifford
Pinchot National Forest,
Plumas National Forest,
Rogue-Siskiyou National
Forest
Westminster Fire Department
(Colorado)
Private practitioners and
landowners



A Forest Service Burn Boss trainee and Ashland Fire and Rescue Captain discuss the plan for lighting and holding the day's burn. © TNC/Jeremy Bailey



Spanish-speaking firefighters and their bilingual counterparts take notes at the pre-burn briefing. The Ashland TREX team includes participants from England, Mexico and Spain, as well as from nine U.S. states. © TNC/Jeremy Bailey

prescribed fire agenda. Unique to the Ashland TREX is its collaboration with the Ashland Forest Resiliency program and its remarkable efforts in developing a stewardship agreement that engages the local community with Forest Service management plans.

The first two days of the TREX also provided time for participants to acclimate, get their module assignments, familiarize themselves with new crew members and local fire knowledge, participate in crew cohesion exercises and training assignments, and complete any necessary NWCG firefighting requirements including fire shelter deployment and fitness tests.

Participants and their six engines were split into three modules, each including an array of qualifications and experience, from FMOs with years of fire experience to students and locals who came to the TREX with fresh red cards and little to no fire experience. Modules organized themselves using the Incident Command System, with responsibilities delegated to each crew member, and started their training exercises. For example, the modules drove out to Emigrant Lake, a popular local recreation area, to run a series of drills to get to know their respective engines and their crew mates as they performed progressive hose lays, pump and roll, and engine drafting techniques (and perhaps a quick dip in the lake on the warm spring day).

By the third day, they were ready to put fire on the ground together. Each module set off for its day's assignment, building their skills while getting treatments on the ground. In the first two days of burning, the three modules of the TREX team completed five burn units—more than 130 acres—on BLM, Forest Service and private lands.

Participants will continue work on this TREX through May 21, gathering each day in Ashland to engage and learn, volunteering their time, knowledge, equipment and physical capabilities to conduct safe and beneficial prescribed fire treatments. In exchange, they get opportunities to network, share knowledge, cultivate prescribed fire nationally, and promote



An experienced burner and mentor from Grayback Forestry introduces himself to a graduate student from Oregon State University on her first day on a controlled burn. She spent the next hour learning how to use a drip torch to direct the fire's spread, how to moderate fire intensity, and how to communicate with nearby firefighters.

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Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project

Ashland is a beautiful town of 21,000 nestled in the Rogue Valley where the Siskiyou and Cascade Mountains meet. Home to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Southern Oregon University, Ashland has a community of creative, innovative people who care about their environment. The Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project (AFR) grew from this. It is a collaborative partnership established between the U.S. Forest Service, City of Ashland, Lomakatsi Restoration Project and The Nature Conservancy, with initial monitoring program support from the National Forest Foundation. The partners collaborate with university faculty and students, interested citizens and other local organizations. The community and Forest Service effectively designed AFR as a ten-year stewardship project to reduce the risk of severe wildfire in the watershed to protect water quality, older forests, wildlife, people, property and quality of life. It is an unprecedented plan in which the city of Ashland is proactively restoring and protecting their watershed for future generations with prescribed fire techniques.

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land stewardship through the safe and responsible use of prescribed fire. The power of both Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges and the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project work in this beautiful southern Oregon landscape—and the power of collaboration—are apparent already in the early days of this Ashland TREX.

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) 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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