Experiential training events with multiple objectives—training, outreach and treatments—are not part of the normal, comfortable status quo. But TREX provide precisely this, and all who are involved in the events work hard to maintain this balance. Professional fire practitioners gain experience, learn about conservation, and receive position task book evaluations. Less traditional training partners—private contractors, ranchers, and others—engage in events that meet NWCG safety standards, gaining skills to work more safely and effectively. And TREX include some participants who have never burned before: biologists and air quality agency staff, for example, come to better understand how fire affects their work. TREX events-strong partnerships and coalitions in the fire community and diversify the workforce by exposing participants to practitioners from other places and diverse backgrounds.

Each TREX starts with introductions to local ecosystems and land management practices, and to fellow crew members and equipment. Crews then implement a series of prescribed fires, burning on average for 5-10 days, and accomplishing from a few hundred to several thousand acres of treatments on priority landscapes and around communities at risk from wildfire—simultaneously building skills and fostering healthy and natural human communities.

TREX participants are immersed in demonstrations, discussions, readings and experiential training to learn—and teach—about myriad aspects of prescribed fire. The training delivers a foundation of key safety, operational and tactical skills, including:

- NWCG basic firefighter safety training for those who need it;
- scouting, lighting, holding, mop-up and patrolling controlled burns;
- communicating effectively by radio;
- delivering & receiving briefings, conducting after action reviews, and documenting daily actions and activities; and
- using a variety of tactics and tools from different regions of the country (and world).

These are placed in a larger fire management context:

- the Incident Command System, use of daily planning cycles and planning documents;
- planning, organizing and implementing controlled burns; and
- monitoring fire effects, report writing and reporting to senior managers.

And, perhaps most important, TREX integrate prescribed fire strategies and tactics into a holistic ecological and social context, that includes:

- regional fire ecology and local socio-economic impacts of fire management;
- work with groups like prescribed fire councils and landowner associations; and
- fire adapted communities concepts.

For more information, contact:

Jeremy Bailey jeremy баiley@tnc.org (801) 599-1394
Guy Duffner gduffner@tnc.org (801) 320-0524

TREX are collaborative, hands-on training experiences that build capacity for integrated fire management

TREX are conducted in a wide range of landscapes, with a variety of ecological and social goals. In Nebraska this spring, burns restored and maintained prairie and reduced woody encroachment on rangeland. On the coastal plain of Virginia, underburns were conducted to maintain longleaf pine habitat. In northern California mountains, burning reduced hazardous fuels loads and rejuvenated cultural resources.

In addition to focusing on local ecological and fire management issues, TREX explicitly embrace local fire cultures. In northern California this spring, that included classroom presentations on traditional burning practices and the products they provide and, for example, the identification of basket-making materials in the field. In Nebraska, this might take the form of razor-straight blacklines on private units, in line with local practice.

One of the things that make TREX successful is the “can do” attitude people bring: large groups gather, ready to work. They burn together when conditions are right—often on a particular group of practitioners being engaged. The Nebraskan Valley TREX was timed to coincide with universities’ spring breaks so that numerous students could attend, while the Virginia event included many state agency staff and the TNC TREX had a strong tribal component.

All TREX incorporate a range of skill levels and professional backgrounds in the people taking part. However, the events often have a focus on a particular group of practitioners being engaged. The Nebraskan Valley TREX was timed to coincide with universities’ spring breaks so that numerous students could attend, while the Virginia event included many state agency staff and the TNC TREX had a strong tribal component.

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