



Notes from the Field

An outreach meeting with landowners in rural northern California—including some whose businesses depend on the land—helped define issues to be addressed and strategies to support their successful use of prescribed fire.

Rural businesses considering prescribed fire implementation are often those that rely on the beauty of their landscape to draw customers: for resorts, rustic lodges, hunting adventure companies and outdoor camps, scenic beauty and access to the outdoors are central to the business. Because of this, projects that temporarily affect the ability of such a business to use its land will have financial consequences that require additional considerations.

At a recent outreach meeting the Watershed Research and Training Center's Fire, Fuels and Forestry Manager, Dave Jaramillo, met with a group of landowners to begin discussing the benefits of prescribed fire and what its use entails. He also spoke to them about the process of working with the Trinity Integrated Fire Management Partnership, a local prescribed fire program in which the Watershed Center is a partner. Among the meeting attendees was a woman who owns a lodge that is her primary source of income; her concerns about prescribed fire implementation and its potential impacts on her business highlighted some of the issues rural land-based business owners may have to consider when considering using prescribed fire.

Some key factors to be addressed emerged from this dialogue, along with some strategies for anticipating

and meeting business owner needs. Briefly, when discussing and planning work with these kinds of private landowners:

1. **Find out details about the business.** Knowing about their busiest times, their primary clientele, and their key land use needs are essential parts of planning. Burning during off-times and according to client use will minimize revenue losses. The business owner will approach you with these concerns, but being aware of them from the
2. **Discuss the impacts of smoke on the business.** Some businesses may need to close during implementation. If adjacent properties are also using prescribed fire and sending up smoke, this could extend that window of time for potential loss of revenue. Taking as many steps as possible to narrow this window by organizing with adjacent landowners and developing burn plans that proactively address business closure will help business owners with the decision about when and how to implement.
3. **Communicate clearly about burn windows.** Accommodating burn windows will be a big challenge to businesses that need to close during implementation.



Dave Jaramillo, WRTC Fire, Fuels, and Forestry Manager, tours the property of a lodge owner and discusses what her land will look like following a prescribed burn. *Photo: WRTC/Piper McDaniel*

Having clear expectations about the needed flexibility for burn windows is an essential part of ensuring that landowners are happy with the process and outcomes of their burn.

4. **Let them know treatments can be tailored to address their needs**, and frame the process as a benefit to their business. Tailored treatments are important to all landowners, but in the case of businesses, emphasize that treatments can balance a need to maintain aesthetics and access to the land with long-term stewardship. A short-term change in the aesthetics of their scenery is a calculated risk whose benefits far outweigh the risks of severe fire damage, and in the long-term, prescribed fire will benefit the landscape and help it to be more vibrant and beautiful.
5. **Have concrete information about what the land will look like following implementation.** A business owner will want to know how the land will look after burning, and how long it will take for the landscape to replenish. Be prepared to talk about this specifically, and offer time frames. If possible provide visual aids, in the form of before and after

photos, or take them to tour a burn site so they will have an idea about what to expect. This will help them make an informed decision they are comfortable with.

6. **Encourage them to promote their land stewardship.** Businesses can use their efforts as land stewards as a promotional and marketing tool. Depending on their clientele, they may even be able to offer tours of burn sites, and provide information about the ecological

benefits of prescribed fire. This sort of branding helps access certain customers, and is also a great way to raise awareness about prescribed fire.

Being prepared to address business interests will help in negotiations with land-based business owners. Approaching business owners with information and planning options tailored to meet their needs will increase their comfort, and help facilitate a successful burn that benefits both the landowners and the wider community.

About the Trinity Integrated Fire Management Partnership

The TIFMP was developed in 2011 to with goal of making Trinity County communities more fire-adapted by fostering all-lands management capacity. Employing a diversified strategy, the TIFMP works to increase coordination and cooperation between resource agencies, landowners and institutions around prescribed fire efforts that increase local capacity. Through coordinated and collaborative planning, landowner education, and on-the-ground implementation, the partnership's efforts increase community wildfire protection, improve landscape health, support the reintegration of fire to the landscape and facilitate the development of fire management strategies that create local jobs and capacity.

TIFMP members include the Watershed Research and Training Center, CAL FIRE, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Trinity County Waterworks District 1, SMART Center, California Department of Corrections, local workers and private contractors, volunteer fire departments, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Trinity County Fire Safe Council, regional partners, air quality regulators, and local landowners.

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For more about the FAC Learning Network, visit:
<http://facnetwork.org/>

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