



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Prescribed Fire Training Exchange Loess Hills, Iowa April 2013

In the Loess Hills of western Iowa, land managers, farmers and municipal fire departments are working together to improve the prairies and pastures for forage, wildlife habitat and scenic beauty. Firefighters from federal, state, county, private and municipal departments from six states—Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming—arrived in the first week of April to exchange knowledge and experience while completing numerous controlled burns. The crews, made up of both seasoned fire professionals and new recruits, are working with land managers in the Loess Hills to practice and improve their prescribed fire skills

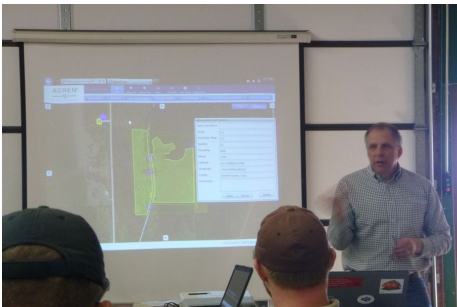
while also providing a much needed benefit to the land.

“What a great learning opportunity,” said Bob Buhr of the Bureau of Land Management in Wyoming. “We’re getting to work with firefighters from the Kansas Forest Service, Pottawattamie County, Harrison County, Council Bluffs Fire Department, Iowa DNR, the US Forest Service and even a couple of non-profit organizations.”

Kyle Lapham, the FLN landscape leader and Loess Hills Fire Coordinator for The Nature Conservancy, noted that “Iowa is a prairie state, but only a tenth of one percent of Iowa’s native prairies remain, and

the largest intact tracts are here in the Loess Hills. Fire has long played an important role in the prairies and forests of North America, so if we want to protect our water and soils, we need to keep good fire on the landscape.” The controlled burns that do that job are planned weeks and sometimes months in advance; burn plans are written by the land owner and burns are conducted only when the weather is just right.

This training started with the participants spending half a day in the classroom learning about local ecology and burn planning, and working with a local meteorologist to understand the weather patterns and forecasts for the area. Participants then went out and burned 33 acres at Farm Creek Public Wildlife Area near Carson, Iowa. Over the course of two weeks, the firefighters will burn about 1,500 acres on state, county, Conservancy and private ground.



The first day’s classroom session included an introduction to Agren’s prescribed fire planning tool. © Amy Crouch/TNC



Pre-burn planning and briefings are essential to the safe and effective use of prescribed fire. © Jeremy Bailey/TNC



A resource planner with Pottawattamie County makes sure the fire stays where it belongs. © Jeremy Bailey/TNC



Firefighters worked into the early evening to make sure Farm Creek was secure before heading back to camp. © Amy Crouch/TNC

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The Fire Learning Network is supported by *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 about the FLN, contact Lynn Decker at ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.



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