

Telling the Stories: Working with the Media for Fire & Restoration

Outreach, through the media and by communicating directly to individuals about fire and restoration, is a key part of the work done under PERC. Many actions needed to make forests and grasslands more resilient and protect human communities—thinning trees, lighting fires, putting smoke in the air—raise community concerns that can hamper the ability to get needed work done.

Research has shown that among the most effective, trusted communicators about fire are “people with hats”—fire-fighters and other practitioners. The Fire Learning Network (FLN), prescribed fire training exchanges (TRES) and Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER) projects are therefore ideal means of getting the word out about “good fire.” With the addition of the Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) Learning Network to the suite of PERC tools, yet another avenue for improving communication between the various stakeholders in places affected by fire is available.

In addition to direct communications through field tours and interpretive brochures, signs and video, in the latter part of 2013, PERC programs and people appeared in at least 40 radio, TV, newspaper, and online media pieces, from the Angel Fire, New Mexico daily paper to NPR’s Weekend Edition.

TRES events include training in crafting and delivering key messages about the benefits of prescribed fire and its use as a management tool, and designated days during each event for members of the media to experience the work at close range and talk with practitioners. This has proved to be an excellent strategy for giving reporters a good understanding of basic concepts in a way that they can effectively share with readers, viewers and listeners.



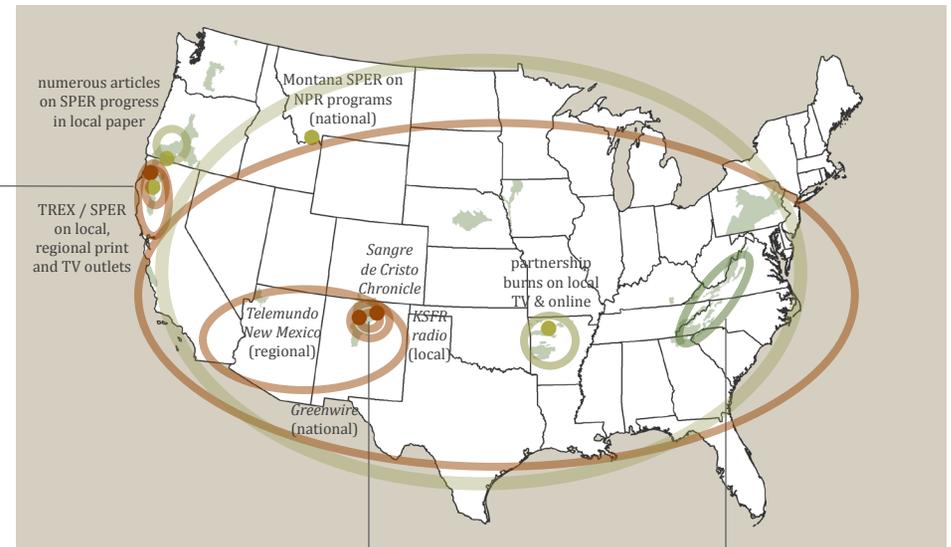
The fruits of this can be seen, for example, in the article in a local paper about the TRES hosted by the FLN and Northern California Prescribed Fire Council, which prominently featured a happy landowner with fire burning in his back yard.

A FEW GOOD LINKS “Fighting Fire with Fire: Why Some Burns are Good for Nature”—on the SPER project in Montana; ran on NPR’s *Weekend Edition* July 21 (<http://www.npr.org/2013/07/21/203245958/fighting-fire-with-fire-why-some-burns-are-good-for-nature>)

“Loess Hills Prescribed Fire”—about the spring TRES in the Loess Hills ran on *Iowa Public TV* in August (http://youtu.be/HAHmTn_7XFY)

Sangre de Cristo Chronicle filmed a TRES interview on prescribed burn precautions (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30YtKeuRM3k>)

building support for collaborative approaches to integrated fire management



At the Black Lake TRES, consistent engagement with local media changed the conversation from a pre-event headline of “Residents Brace for Sept. 30 Burn Near Angel Fire” to coverage highlighting the community safety and forest health benefits of the burns, with a video of TRES participants explaining the care that goes into planning, conducting and monitoring a prescribed burn.

Similar stories were carried by the regional online *Telemundo New Mexico*, and in an article in the national *Greenwire*.

The Central Appalachians and Southern Blue Ridge FLNs have adapted a brochure on prescribed fire to various regions to support multi-partner outreach efforts.

In the Southern Blue Ridge FLN, the long-term FLN collaboration among partners was credited for the effective public messaging and outreach (as well as aiding in containment efforts) during the late fall Table Rock wildfire in the Pisgah National Forest.

“We found good local and regional interest in the *Fire for Water* video. Most importantly it helped the mayor and chamber of commerce assume the role of leader and visionary to advance restoration at scale.”