

Fire Learning Network

A cooperative program of the Forest Service, Department of the Interior agencies and The Nature Conservancy, the FLN has a 16-year track record of helping to restore our nation's forests and grasslands and to make communities safer from fire.



The FLN supports public-private landscape partnerships that engage in strategic planning, implementation and monitoring. This builds the trust and relationships critical to durable, sustainable collaborations that facilitate work across boundaries and leverage a diversity of investments. The FLN also provides a means for sharing the tools and innovations that increase capacity and enable strategies to get to scale.

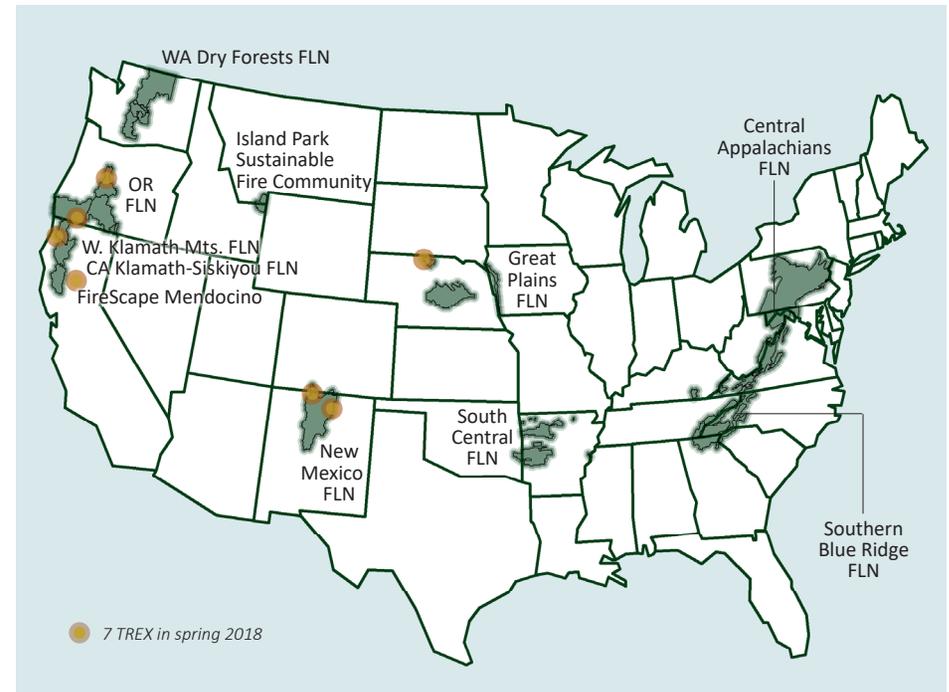
Network News

After 14 years—leading first the FLN, and then implementation of the entire PERFECT cooperative agreement—Lynn Decker retired in April. Over the course of her tenure, she guided the FLN to maturity, and mentored an extended team through the development of innovative strategies that sprang from that foundation, including Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX), the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC Net) and the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN). In her announcement to FLN leaders, Lynn spoke from the heart: “I have loved enabling your work, the work of your partners and working with you—great people all! You have inspired me and so many others on many flaming fronts.”

Building Bridges to Facilitate Shared Learning and Action

As a mature network, the FLN is focusing on strengthening its leadership and partnerships, with an emphasis on growing and diversifying local and regional coordinating capacity. This includes partnering within the FLN, between the FLN and other networks under the PERFECT cooperative agreement—the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC Net), Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX) Coaches Network and the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN)—and with other initiatives and organizations working in the same geographic area or field.

This spring, FLN leaders in Oregon and Washington—who fill leadership roles in their state prescribed fire councils—facilitated a joint workshop of the councils. One of the workshop goals was to strengthen the participation of private landowners, several of whom shared their unique stories and offered strategies to improve outcomes for private burners; a useful framework was also provided by the Chiloquin Community Forest and Fire Project. As a result, both councils have established a new priority for supporting private lands burning. The workshop also cemented connections between



This spring, ten regional networks and large landscapes were supported by PERFECT funding, advancing a shared vision of integrated and adaptive fire management through 30 landscape collaboratives across the country.

regional councils across state lines in northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington, highlighted the cross-

In late February, prescribed fire practitioners toured the Mt. Adams Community Forest near Glenwood, Washington during a joint workshop of the Oregon and Washington prescribed fire councils.

© WA RC&D (Kara Karboski)





A 2014 Klamath TREX participant was inspired by the experience to pursue a career in fire, going on to work on Forest Service crews in subsequent years. She is now an emerging fire leader in her community: having received her master's degree from University of Oregon, she is currently working for the Karuk Tribe facilitating internships with universities and other educational institutions. © Jenny Staats

border prescribed fire partnerships already producing outcomes on the ground, and fostered an agreement with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that establishes a joint funding mechanism to support council operations.

In May, the Burned Area Learning Network (BALN) held a post-fire restoration field tour of Santa Clara Canyon followed by a workshop with the East Jemez Landscape Futures project. More than 30 partners took part in the two-day event, which reinforced connections within the New Mexico water and forest conservation communities. It also brought together key research scientists working on post-fire reforestation challenges—for example, researchers from New Mexico State University and the University of New Mexico who connected on the field tour went on to develop a joint research proposal, while Bandelier National Monument staff got assistance

developing tangible objectives for their East Jemez project.

BALN connections to the Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network—made through the national network—also paid dividends: after a recent large wildfire on private lands, the BALN was able to tap their Washington colleagues' experience with community recovery from severe wildfires to provide advice to New Mexico State Forestry on assembling a post-fire response team.

In the Southeast, the South Central FLN continued its multi-state work with the Shortleaf Pine Initiative, hosting a regional workshop in northwest Alabama in January. More than 20 partners from Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee convened to help initiate a 22,000-acre shortleaf pine restoration and demonstration area in a two-state landscape involving multiple partners who have rarely worked together—precisely the kind of work the FLN excels in. Project partners toured the restoration area, discussed current conditions, and began the development of desired future conditions for different sites. Partners also discussed current challenges, restoration prescriptions, and, perhaps most important, opportunities to accelerate the partnership.



The FLN led spring burning near Hayfork, California, building capacity and partnerships.

© WRTC (David Jaramillo)

Developing Capacity to Make a Difference on the Ground

The FLN also focuses on building a sustainable interjurisdictional workforce. Again, partnerships in the national network and coordination with others locally are essential to these efforts.

The Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association was officially formed in northern California this spring. This PBA—the first in the state—was the direct result of learning exchanges over the past year with FLN and TREX partners in the Great Plains, along with small, targeted investments by the California Klamath-Siskiyou FLN in live-fire trainings. In a place where private-land burning is not the rule, these investments inspired landowners: in the last year, partners in what became the PBA completed seven burns totaling more than 200 acres. Staffed with volunteer fire departments, landowners and other

community members, these burns have shifted the conversation in the county, among landowners and agency personnel alike, from “if we might burn” to “where will we burn during the next good window?”—knowing that if it can be done in Nebraska, it can be done in California.

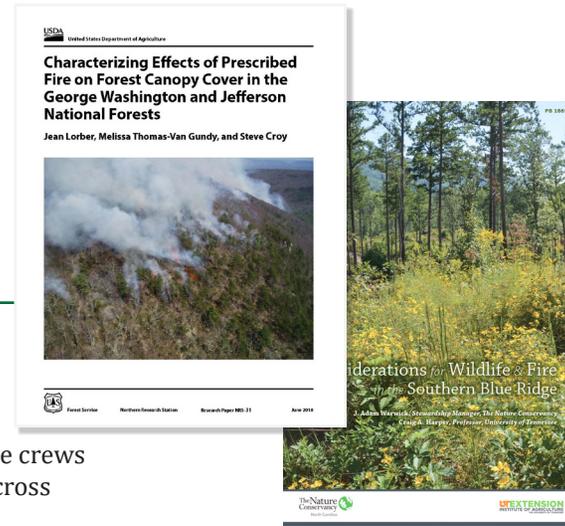
FLN members help each other—local neighbors and national network colleagues—with burning, which boosts both landscape capacity and individual experience. This can take a number of forms.

In Idaho, the Island Park Sustainable Fire Community (IPSF) followed up on relationships built with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on the Flat Ranch burn in 2016, and assisted the FWS on their first private-land prescribed burn in the state. While that burn wasn't in the IPSFC project area, it supported this FLN's goal of furthering the safe

Two publications released this spring bring the work of FLN partners to the wider practitioner community.

Effects of prescribed fire on canopy cover: <https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/56438>

Considerations for wildlife and fire: <http://www.appalachianfire.org/research-publications-1/2018/6/26/considerations-for-wildlife-fire-in-the-southern-blue-ridge>



use of controlled fire to restore habitat across a larger landscape—and building the partnerships needed for success.

A federal partner from IPSFC took part in the Central Oregon TREX this spring, working on his fireline skills while helping Oregon get priority burning done. His participation—along with peer assists at TREX events from partners in the Southern Blue Ridge and South Central FLNs—was also part of the glue that makes the networks strong. While TREX coaches take part in numerous events and maintain consistent delivery and performance, participation from FLN landscapes like this provides additional connections between the various TREX and FLNs, which improves both the exchange of knowledge and the interconnections between people and places.

Without the relationships built through the FLN, it is unlikely that the Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee chapters of The Nature Conservancy would have engaged the seasonal and on-call burn crews that assisted with about 20,000 acres of burning accomplished by Southern Blue Ridge FLN partners this year. This model is based on a pilot developed by the Central Appalachians FLN under SPER; the four Conservancy chapters worked together to secure funding

(from the USDA Forest Service Region 8 and Joint Chiefs' funding, with match from the Conservancy), and to deploy the crews to accomplish priority burns across the region.

Using Science and Cultural Knowledge for Adaptive Management

From the very beginning, FLN partners have worked together to set goals, plan actions, observe effects, and adjust their work as needed.

The Heart of the Appalachians landscape in Virginia went back to its FLN roots this spring, and began a formal revision of its strategic plan with a day-long workshop that brought together 33 people from six agencies. They started with a look back at 13 years of accomplishments, and small groups then brainstormed action items in three categories from the original plan. A steering committee is now overseeing the revision that will guide work in this landscape over the next several years.

In northern California, a small team from the adjacent California Klamath-Siskiyou and Western Klamath Mountains FLNs spent a full day strategizing how to advance spatial fire planning in the Klamath and Siskiyou mountains of northern California and southern Oregon. They discussed

the social, political, economic and ecological components that need to be included, and came up with a detailed plan of action to achieve results, which included forming a multi-disciplinary steering committee with members from numerous organizations in both states.

In North Carolina, the Conservancy and the Southern Blue Ridge FLN captured years of on-the-ground experience and research in the report "Considerations for Wildlife & Fire in the Southern Blue Ridge." It includes fact sheets about 13 species and taxonomic groups that include brief life histories, habitat needs, monitoring methods, and fire effects and conservation challenges.

In the Central Appalachians FLN, multi-partner vegetation monitoring has been conducted for 10 years by members of the Heart of the Appalachians landscape's Monitoring Working Group. This group's data was used as the basis for the report

"Characterizing Effects of Prescribed Fire on Forest Canopy Cover in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests." Published by the Northern Research Station, the report is based on analysis of more than 100 burn events over 20 years.

Broadening and Deepening Community Engagement

Gone are the days when public outreach meant just a press release or a brochure. FLNs across the country are using new channels and working with new partners to reach and engage people in more compelling ways.

Fire Learning Trails are springing up across the southern and central Appalachians region thanks to the FLN, Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy. These trails, which have a combination of interpretive signs and podcasts that discuss various aspects of wildland fire in the mountains, are now in place in several states, and on lands spanning multiple agencies. This spring, a set of three podcasts was added to the signs on the Fire Learning Trail on the Daniel Boone National Forest, and partners from the Chattahoochee National Forest are interested in adapting these products to their landscape.



The #goodfire hashtag, which originated with the first Southern Blue Ridge FLN Fire Learning Trail in 2017, is being picked up nationally. About 70,000 people see it each week.

A Fire Learning Trail runs through Table Rock State Park in South Carolina. Located in the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment landscape of the Southern Blue Ridge FLN, the park hosted the regional network's annual workshop in May, so participants were able to experience part of the learning trail during the field tour. Links to all the podcasts are at <http://www.appalachianfire.org/thefirelearningtrail/>.

Photo: USFS (Steve Bekkerus)

An asset-based community development effort was undertaken in two communities in the FireScope Mendocino landscape, led by community engagement consultant Jana Carp. As part of this, a Round Valley screening of Paul Hessburg's "Era of Megafires," followed by a discussion, drew about 30 people. The Forest Service battalion chief scheduled to co-facilitate was on a fire, but a CAL FIRE crew member in the audience stepped up to answer questions about defensible space—and got three immediate takers in response to an offer to do home inspections. Most of the audience stayed for an hour, and some even longer, talking about how to proceed, given the community's assets.

The Oregon FLN once again delivered two TREX this spring, in Ashland and Central Oregon. Both TREX continue to provide vehicles not only for training and accomplishing prescribed fire, but

for public outreach and engagement on issues related to its increasing use in fire-adapted forests surrounding communities. This outreach is multi-faceted and involves an ever-widening array of local, state and regional partners, including members of FAC Net. New this year is a growing partnership between people working in public health, air quality and fire management who are communicating strategies that residents can use to mitigate smoke impacts.

Collectively, Oregon partners have used a wide range of media to reach people—including street and lamppost banners; public service announcement videos; newspapers, Facebook and blog posts; and perhaps most important, the Central Oregon Fire Info website, with resources on when and where fire is occurring, smoke and air quality impacts, and easy-to-follow public health protection measures. Looking ahead, professional photo and video shot during the spring TREX yielded video footage, still images and interviews with fire professionals for use in future outreach and social media campaigns.

"There is so much action across the country to get fire back onto the landscape. This collective action helps to support all of our local work."

Capitalizing on Success for Greater Collective Impact

FLN efforts—especially when aligned with those of other networks and partnerships—have effects that reach well beyond their landscape borders. This year, the clearest examples are in California and Washington, where more than a decade of investments by the FLN—and, more recently, TREX and FAC Net—are bearing remarkable fruit.

The work of the California Klamath-Siskiyou and Western Klamath Mountains FLNs—and their leadership and support of the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council, numerous TREX, and other regional innovation and demonstration efforts—facilitated and enabled the work behind executive order B-52-18 issued by Governor Jerry Brown in May. Intended to protect communities from wildfire and climate impacts, this order demonstrates the state's strong pivot toward embracing prescribed fire as an essential tool for land management and climate mitigation.

In Washington, the Department of Natural Resources released a 20-year forest health strategic plan that sets forth a collaboratively developed all-

lands vision and approach for eastern Washington forests. Numerous FLN and FAC Net partners are among those acknowledged for their contributions, and according to the Washington Dry Forests FLN lead, "if you read through this plan you will recognize many of the strategies and approaches presented at our annual meetings over the years." The strategic plan is supported by legislative actions, including SB 5546 (addressing wildfire risk by creating a forest health treatment assessment) and HB 1711 (prioritizing lands to receive forest health treatments). This action follows earlier breakthrough legislation in the state, the 2928 Forest Resiliency Burning Pilot, also supported by FLN and other partners who have helped implement it. When members of all PERFECT networks met for their national workshop in Wenatchee this spring, they saw some of this collective work firsthand—and the inspiration is likely to ripple throughout the networks and across the country.

The FLN is supported by *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together* (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Marek Smith at marek_smith@tnc.org or (704) 681-1165.

PERFACT is an equal opportunity provider.