

# Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network

Members of the FAC Net share a vision of accelerating the adoption of fire adapted communities concepts across the nation using a tested learning network approach.

## Growing a Network for Fire Adapted Communities

The FAC Net is pursuing multiple growth strategies to spread fire adaptation concepts across the country. We are working with developing state-wide networks to help deepen their impact and broaden ours. We continue to grow our core membership. And we are adding new ways, such as the new Affiliate Membership category, for individuals and organizations to engage with the network.

Our efforts are extended and enriched by work with several states—including Colorado, Nevada and Washington—to support independent state-wide networks modeled after the FAC Net. By helping to launch and support such efforts we are creating opportunities for many additional communities to

deeply engage and connect with other fire adaptation practitioners. At the same time, our members are connected to many more people and communities through these ties.

This spring we also began outreach to bring in a new set of core network members. In seeking additional members we looked to geographic areas where the network was not yet connected, and considered organization types and the scope and scale of fire adaptation work people were undertaking. As a result of this outreach we added two new members: a Rapid City (SD) community-based effort led by the municipal fire department, and the State of Utah, working through the state's Wildland-Urban Interface Coordinator.

*“The most beneficial part of the FAC Net is the breadth and depth of experience and knowledge. No matter what challenge or new task we are facing, we know that someone within the network will have information that can help us avoid pitfalls and ensure that our efforts are as effective as possible. Having access to this great resource base is a tremendous confidence builder and makes it feel like someone’s always ‘got our back.’”*



One of the areas of experience that the Rapid City Fire Department brings to the network is the work of their veteran wildfire mitigation crew. In turn, they are interested in learning from the network more about using prescribed fire as a treatment option.

The Utah WUI Coordinator engaged with the network at the annual workshop in April, which gave her an opportunity to meet other network members and engage with some of the communities of practice. She has said that Utah is particularly interested in lessons about best practices for CWPPs and FAC outreach, and reports that the FAC Net has already helped her tremendously. She and a colleague have submitted a proposal that will help them ramp up FAC outreach in the Wasatch Front, where much of the state's population lives, in the coming year.

Finally, early this year we added a new membership type—affiliate members—designed to allow more individuals and organizations to engage with the national network. Affiliate members are connected to our core members and each other through our new website and a special Podio online workspace.

The new website lets FAC Net reach a broader audience, and includes ways



Among the highlights of the year for many FAC Net members is the annual workshop, hosted this year in Jacksonville (FL) by the Florida Forest Service and their partners. The field day included a tour of a prescribed burn in progress, a first experience for many that inspired excellent dialog. @Anne Mottek



Inside, the workshop turned to making connections between people, ideas and scales of work. The sessions and exercises that accomplished this ran from the gamut from presentations to games, brainstorming sessions to work planning.

@TNC/Wendy Fulks, Nevada Land Trust

*“All these tools are working incredibly well for sharing. The feedback on the new website from local partners has been positive. It explains the FAC Net and allows for them to engage much more in FAC concepts and the Network.”*

*“Podio has been great for getting quick (and plentiful) suggestions from fellow practitioners. This really helps with credibility and confidence for all involved. For example, I had a homeowner looking for covenants that discussed maintenance of mitigation treatments. Within 10 hours of posting the question on Podio I had several examples to send him and the homeowner was extremely impressed with the quick response.”*

*“The communities of practice introduce more frequent chances for reaching out to others in the FAC Net to keep vital personal connections active.”*

to engage in two-way communication. The addition of the Member Profile and Affiliate Membership features of the site are critical to our growth strategy and to achieve our long-term goal of spreading fire adaptation practices nationwide. In just over five months, we’ve added 40 affiliate members to the network. These new members have created profiles, many have attended the introductory webinar in May or joined Podio space, and several have written posts for the network blog.

### **Building Communities of Practice**

Among the changes that will help the FAC Net both be more effective internally and reach outward to other practitioners is the development and support of communities of practice (COPs). There are currently seven active COPs, with members drawn from both the FAC Net and the Fire Learning Network:

- Community Wildfire Protection Planning
- Building Support for FAC (previously: Engagement and Communication)
- Network Builders Club
- Wood Utilization (previously Treatment Economics)
- Community of Practice for Using Fire

- Watershed Management
- Working with Landowners/Homeowners

These groups are progressing in different ways, at different paces, as is expected in the development of need-driven communities. All seven COPs have online workspaces on Podio that are similar to that set up for the whole FAC Net, but that allow more focused discussion and resource collections. In addition, the Landowner/Homeowner COP and CWPP COP hold quarterly webinars. The Watershed COP held two webinars this spring on connecting upstream and downstream users, highlighting the Rio Grande Water Fund and watershed assessments. And discussions within the Communications and Outreach COP led to a more refined focus, and a name change to “Building Support for FAC” that reflects it.

As an example of the work being done by the COPs, the CWPP group has started work on a series of “quick guides” to gather innovations and best practices from FAC Net members for easy reference. One guide will describe new strategies for engaging citizens in helping to create, and use their CWPPs. For example, some members have begun investing in a separate version of their CWPP that is nicely designed, engaging and easy to read

to increase its usability—and use; lessons from this will be captured in a guide. A second guide will be about updating CWPPs to include fairly recent developments such as the Cohesive Strategy and the rise of fire adapted communities thinking. A third will look at how practitioners are leveraging technology to develop and implement CWPPs. For example, one FAC Net member is working on a smart phone app that citizens will be able to use to track their community’s progress treating fuels.

The Net Builders Club is proving to be a critical strategy for sharing a range of approaches and models for state-wide network building. There is more demand for this topic than we are staffed to manage; without this forum, we would be able to support far fewer people exploring the potential to launch a state network. Members of this COP are using *Connecting to Change the World*, the *Netweaver’s Handbook* and monthly group calls to further their practice of network-building. Those participating in this COP report good learning about the methods and design considerations we are faced with, and are finding the group to be a solid resource for helping to offer and vet new ideas and solutions.



A landowner looks over a map with a fire team member on the 2016 Pony Fire near Happy Camp (CA). The FAC Net is supporting growth of the Community Liaison Program (CLP), which works to build effective communication between local communities and wildfire incident management teams.

When we talk about FAC, we often think about being prepared for fires—defensible space, fuels reduction, cleaning gutters, neighborhood risk assessments, fire-resistant building materials—and to a lesser extent recovering after fires have come and gone. There are very few resources or innovations out there to help create better outcomes for communities during wildfire events. The Community Liaison Program tries to bridge that gap between fire preparedness and fire recovery. If we are going to be truly fire adapted, and live with the inevitability of fire, it is critical to figure out how to make the fire events themselves more approachable and understandable, to have a trusted source of current information, and to make sure that local place-based knowledge is available to assist in the fire management, strategy and operations. The CLP offers a potential solution to this part of the spectrum of being truly fire adapted. The concept seems to resonate with a lot of FAC Net members and affected communities.

© Mark DuPont



*“The FAC Net has provided the opportunity for sharing with and learning from other networks and members that are located across the country. This has been invaluable to us. Interacting with the various members, especially at the annual workshop, and understanding their accomplishments, challenges and solutions has helped to inform us in moving our initiatives forward. More specifically, these interactions have confirmed that most of the national members face the same problems, and we have found that we can collaborate, learn and innovate collectively to provide solutions.”*

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All seven COPs met in person at the annual workshop, making good progress refining priorities and identifying opportunities for co-learning. We recently began holding regular calls for all COP leads, and have begun planning a COP leads training to be held in early December.

### **Coming Together to Weave Stronger Networks**

Gathering people together to accomplish work—and perhaps more importantly, discover new ties and strengthen existing ones—continues to be a key role of the network. Numerous examples of this took place this spring, with two particularly notable examples being the Pacific Northwest Learning Exchange and the annual Learning Networks workshop in April.

Three Pacific Northwest FAC Learning Exchanges held this spring in Deschutes County (OR), Leavenworth and Wenatchee (WA) and Jackson and Josephine Counties (OR) helped make new connections between members of the state-wide network in Washington and members of the two community-based FAC Net members in Oregon. In particular, Washington members from the Okanogan connected with members in central Oregon, sharing

information about long-term recovery and partnerships with community foundations. As a result of the connections made in this series of exchanges, members have proposed a second series of exchanges focused on getting their key partners, including city and county leadership, together to share ideas and connect.

The process of designing and implementing these exchanges also offered many valuable lessons that are being compiled into a handbook and short video that will help other FAC Net members host successful exchanges as well. In the after action review at the close of the set of exchanges, participants said that having FAC Net staff involvement was critical to help guide and document the process.

The annual Learning Networks workshop brought together members of the FAC Net with colleagues, partners and potential partners from across the FAC Net, as well as the Fire Learning Network (FLN), Indigenous Peoples Burning Network and Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges. In addition to the numerous ideas and resources shared in formal sessions, during breaks and meals, and during the field learning exchange, member conversations generated new energy and ideas. For

example, Flagstaff FAC Net members left with a plan to gauge interest in a state-wide network; a southwest Colorado FAC Net member left with a new planning paradigm and tools (the Open Standards for Conservation planning process) to help her run a watershed collaborative; and a member from Island Park took home a list of homeowner engagement strategies to try. Stronger connections were made between FAC Net and FLN fire users in California, Colorado, Oregon, Texas and Virginia, and a shared FLN and FAC Net strategy for development of FAC efforts across the Southern Blue Ridge and Central Appalachians. Network members and staff alike also gathered valuable feedback about their operations that will be used to inform adjustments to strategies in the coming year.

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*Right:* This spring members of the Dolores Watershed and Resilient Forest (DWaRF) collaborative got into the field to talk key ecological attributes on an old Ponderosa Pine Partnership restoration unit.

With initial support from the FAC Net, the DWaRF collaborative has been developing in southwest Colorado over the last year, and the collaborative has now become a priority of the San Juan NF. An early indication of the potential of DWaRF is the recent decision to manage a fire for resource benefit, with the political will to do so likely affected by the broad swath of agencies now talking about the need for fire. © Thurman Wilson



After the Sleepy Hollow Fire, all that was left of a home at one site was a campfire pit and a couple of chairs. The Pacific Northwest Learning Exchange visited this neighborhood located inside the city limits of Wenatchee. As a resident said, “No matter where you live, in this area you are vulnerable to wildfire.” Although the devastation was still evident here, it had been the site of a recent community gathering to help the community healing process and restore a sense of order in the chaos created by the fire and resulting home losses.

A Learning Exchange participant said “It made me think a lot about what community members go through when they experience loss related to wildfire and the immeasurable value the support group and other recovery efforts that we heard about while visiting had on recovering from the fire. A resident characterized recovery as ‘it’s not how high you fly, it’s how high you bounce.’ That really spurred me to think about helping people bounce back from wildfires in the future.” © Project Wildfire



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*“At the annual workshop Lynn [Decker] provided a handout that provided new—to me—definitions of cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. I still find it fascinating, and it provides a new context for me to communicate about our programs and how organizations and people interact professionally. Using this context, and looking back over the past several years, I can see how the culture of our programs has evolved over time, due in large part to the influence of the FAC Net. This influence has been the most beneficial part of the FAC Net for myself and my work.*

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*The FAC Net to me represents the philosophy that human factors in collaborative processes should come before all else. Other components, like process, structure, documentation, and organization are incredibly important, but are secondary to the relationships and trust built among people. Bringing together diverse personalities and perspectives is important to have a successful program, and it also provides a concrete sense of personal growth and satisfaction. I attribute this philosophy primarily to the FAC Net team and its unique approach to leadership, which differs substantially from most fire-focused organizations. The diversity of core participants, who are singularly focused on the same mission but working with disparate resources at different scales lends to the richness of the experience and lessons learned.”*

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For more about the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, visit our website at <http://fireadaptednetwork.org/> or our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCw0iVIThjzZbd5A4bf3tGkw>) where FAC Net videos (including select presentations from webinars) are shared.



At the Harvesting Methods Open House in Flagstaff, a contractor and the Fire Department displayed some of the forestry equipment that will soon be operating in the woods near homes in and around town, giving people a chance to see it up close—and providing fun photo opportunities.

The Greater Flagstaff Forests Project (GFFP) recognizes that the more people know, and the less uncertainty, the greater the support will be for the novel forest thinning projects needed here. The open house was creative, interactive—and provided a chance to speak with experts in the field. These included representatives from the Four Forest Restoration Initiative, Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project and The Nature Conservancy (demonstrating tablet technology that will eliminate the costly and time-consuming process of marking trees). Smokey Bear, Louie the Lumberjack, a university sports team, a creative kids corner and refreshments rounded out the day.

GFFP used the harvesting methods fact sheets created last year to explain the treatment methods that will be used. People learned about expected effects on recreational experiences and wildlife, set appointments to have their properties assessed by Firewise specialists, and met contractors.

Forest restoration has become a driving factor in this community. The open house was designed to address the relevance of forest treatments—and demonstrated the degree to which people will support them. GFFP plans to host this event again as the scale and pace of treatments increase.

© Anne Mottek



At the Leavenworth (WA) Senior Center, more than 40 people joined a discussion about wildfire risk and wildfire preparation and how to prepare for wildfire as part of the Wildfire Preparedness Week, and 75 starter “go kits” were distributed to participants and through the mobile meals program.

“This year our inspiration for Wildfire Preparedness Week came from a FAC Net colleague in Austin (TX). We introduced the ‘fire adapted family’ concept to the Leavenworth community. Our outreach for the week was targeted towards students and seniors, with opportunities for all community members to take action on national Wildfire Preparedness Day.”

© Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition



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