



## Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

# Volunteer Fire Department Prescribed Fire Training

Trinity County, CA  
May 2016

**The first prescribed fire training** tailored for volunteer fire departments in Trinity County was hosted in May by the Watershed Research and Training Center, in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Firestorm and local volunteer fire departments (VFDs). Attended by 22 participants from the Hayfork, Hawkins Bar, Junction City, and Post Mountain VFDs, the training was a great success.

**The two-day training** included lectures, hands-on training and burn implementation on two units spanning seven acres. The burn provided excellent opportunities for training and local capacity-building—and also laid the foundation for future prescribed burns scheduled on the property in the fall, while demonstrating a successful implementation effort in a key neighborhood.

**“It’s one of the larger landowners** in that area, and the first coordinated burn, so it represents a starting point where we can begin working with neighbors to collaborate on burns,” said Dave Jaramillo, coordinator of the training and the Watershed Center’s Fire, Fuels and Forestry Program Manager.

**Jaramillo took a collaborative** approach to the development of the training, taking extra care to engage with local VFDs in the crafting of the curriculum—a key component, he says, for understanding their capacity and maximizing the value of the training. “We had a committee of a couple people from various departments that gave feedback, came to me with ideas, and helped steer the development and keep us on track for what we really want to talk about,” Jaramillo said, “The chiefs expressed what was important for their crews to know and be trained in.”

### Participating Organizations

CAL FIRE  
Firestorm  
Hawkins Bar Volunteer Fire Department  
Hayfork Volunteer Fire Department  
Junction City Volunteer Fire Department  
Post Mountain Volunteer Fire Department  
Shasta-Trinity National Forest  
The Nature Conservancy

**The training was also designed** to balance lecture content with hands-on training and implementation, a strategy that provided a comprehensive overview of prescribed fire and tied it directly to hands-on training and implementation. Lecture content was designed to provide an introduction to the essential components of prescribed fire, including fire ecology, weather observations and measurements, site prep, and implementation, while also helping VFDs to better understand the value of prescribed fire for landscape health, fire preparedness, and fire safety.

**“Seeing it from both angles,** putting fire out and lighting fires too, is a direct benefit,” said the Post Mountain Fire Chief. “This will help us in our jobs to have less fuel around. The prep is helpful because we made fire lines and cut all the brush, we did the pre-burning, we had it wrapped with a four foot hand line. I mean you can’t be more prepared for a wildland fire than that.”



A Junction City VFD firefighter conducts firing operations..

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**As a first step in integrating** local VFDs into Trinity County's prescribed fire network, this training also began to build the new relationships that will strengthen partnerships. For Jaramillo, the prescribed fire training was the starting point of a larger effort to build local capacity for prescribed fire. "The main thing is for us all to come together and recognize that this is an important thing to do," Jaramillo said, "The more we do this together, the more we can build teams of people who understand how to work together and understand enough to light fire. That's super important."



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*The biggest benefit for me was learning how to actually burn and use the drip torch in a specific way to make it work with the weather.*

*Understanding how these things are inextricably linked, and getting a better understanding of the whole symbiotic relationship with fire and weather was key.*

Wildland Firefighter  
Junction City VFD



*Top:* A Shasta-Trinity National Forest Service crew member briefs participants about prescribed fire weather conditions.

*Center:* The Post Mountain Fire Chief explains the use of a belt weather kit to take fire weather observations during an on-the-ground session at the training.

*Bottom:* Firestorm staff brief training participants about plans to hold the fire line.

*All photos © Watershed Research and Training Center (Dave Jaramillo)*



The Fire Learning Network (FLN) is part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

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