



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Spanish-Language Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES)

Northern New Mexico
September 14-30, 2016

The FLN's sixth Spanish-language TRES—or Intercambio y Entrenamiento en Quemadas Prescritas en Español—was hosted this fall by the Cottonwood Gulch Foundation and the Santa Fe National Forest. The main goal of this annual TRES is to integrate the international experience and knowledge of fire practitioners and students from Spanish-speaking countries with their local counterparts, sharing approaches and experiences about fire and conservation across different cultural and natural systems.

The TRES began at the Cottonwood Gulch Ranch, adjacent to the Cibola National Forest, where participants spent the first week familiarizing themselves with the environmental conditions, culture and history of the area—as well as with the equipment, protocols, techniques and even vocabulary—while building a strong and cohesive team, ready to operate effectively. While here, the crew also had a chance to talk with the next generation of fire practitioners, during a visit to the ranch by a group of elementary school students.



On the second day of the TRES, the crew spent three hours with a group of 60 fifth- and sixth-graders. The kids were split into six teams, rotating through six stations where they could check out fire management equipment and talk fire and forests with this international group of dedicated experts. Kids and adults alike clearly enjoyed the experience.

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TRES team, lined up and ready to burn piles at the Mesa Potrero unit. The bright, uniform appearance of their gear is due to a new cache of personal protective equipment provided to TRES through a donation from the Utah chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and used for the first time at this event. © José Luis Duce

The team was led by Rodolfo Zúñiga (TNC Michigan), Jeremy Bailey (Fire Learning Network) and Eytan Krasilovsky (Forest Stewards Guild), with Phillip Dye (Prometheus Fire Consulting) as the Burn Boss. Working with members of the Bluewater Acres VFD, Santa Fe National Forest and the City of Santa Fe Fire Department, they prepared and implemented a 20-acre burn over the course of two operational shifts. This collaboration with local staff not only ensured that there were sufficient resources available to complete the burning, but allowed for enriched learning experiences for the TRES participants and municipal firefighters alike.

On moving to the Santa Fe National Forest, the group had the opportunity to work with forest staff on the El Cuerno Fire. The fire, started by a lightning strike on August 1, was burning on the Coyote Ranger District and was being managed for multiple objectives. While working on

this fire, the TRES crew completed more than 200 acres of burnout operations.

After a couple days on the wildfire, the group moved its basecamp again, to Santa Fe, and set to work on a range of activities from there. These included the implementation of pile burns in the Mesa Potrero unit (again on the Coyote RD) and constructing almost a mile of control



The crew assisted on the El Cuerno wildfire, being managed for multiple objectives on the Coyote district of the Santa Fe National Forest.

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line in the Santa Fe municipal watershed (a priority focus of several other TRES, FLN and FAC Net efforts). Near the end of the TRES, the group helped prepare for and implement two more prescribed burns, the Virgin Mesa unit (Jemez RD) and the Cedar Spring unit (Cuba RD). These provided great opportunities to learn about array of topics, including fire behavior, firing techniques, organization of a burn, control and ignitions operations, burn plans and prescription windows, and impacts on archeological values.

Some of the most valuable moments of the two weeks came—as in many TRES—through the presentations made by the participants, when they talk about the fire world and reality in their own countries. Local presentations this time included



Top: Ignitions on the Cottonwood Gulch prescribed burn in ponderosa pine forest. While modest in acreage, this burn was locally important as the first application of prescribed fire to the unit.

Bottom: Briefing for burning piles on the Coyote RD. © José Luis Duce

great presentations by Blanca Céspedes (University of New Mexico Highlands) and (TRES alumna) Elyssa Duran (BLM). The group also visited the facilities of the SimTable software creator to learn about some of the incredible technology that can be applied to fire, and Forest Service dispatch offices, to meet with fire managers and others in the human infrastructure of fire management. They also visited the sites of the Cerro Grande and La Conchas wildfires with Randy García and Roland Maestas (long-time partners from the Santa Fe NF), to better understand the effects of fire on this landscape.

The last days of the TRES were a great time to tie up all the loose ends: finish presentations, share information, hold a few more training sessions, and complete the evaluations and after action reviews that will improve next year's experience.



Briefing for and conducting broadcast burns on the Virgin Mesa unit on the Jemez RD of the Santa Fe National Forest. © José Luis Duce



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<http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>

More than 800 acres burned, lots of hours of high quality training opportunities, incredible amount of knowledge and experiences shared from different approaches, anecdotes, places ... and the most important, an incredible human group sharing a great time around fire as a nexus.

We would like to thank to lots of people from different organizations, to the local and home country agencies, but mainly to the Santa Fe National Forest people who keep on supporting this TRES and to the Fire Learning Network who made it possible.

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TRES) are 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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