



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Loup River TRES Central Nebraska March 13-25, 2017



Loup River TRES in-briefing

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Amidst a mixed bag of weather—snow, excessive heat, snow again, high winds, rain—the Loup TRES team was able to complete about 3,000 acres of prescribed fire while working and training together over a two-week period in late March. The 51 firefighters came from seven states and five countries, and descended upon central Nebraska to deliver healthy, needed fire to Great Plains grasslands, share their experience and build upon their fireline skills.



The TRES Plans Chief (from Franktown Fire and Rescue in Colorado) ignites a line of the Bull Mountain Unit.

Task Force Bravo rules! I have known that terrain my whole life and I still get goose bumps that you lit it up at night and rocked it!! Ben Wheeler and Burn Boss Dan Kelleher amaze me!

local landowner
via Facebook comments



Blacklining activities early on in the TRES—when conditions weren't suitable for broadcast burning—paid dividends later in the event. After a few days, the team was able to anchor into this blackline and take advantage of a brief evening weather window to burn the eastern half of the Bull Mountain unit, about 800 acres. (This was made possible, in part, by the Sandstone Grill in Burwell, which provided a catered field meal for 50 firefighters on a busy Friday night—on two hours' notice.) The following day was spent securing and patrolling lines.



Left: A firefighter from Spain ignites a blackline along a prescribed fire unit boundary. Crews blacklined to help prepare for lighting the entire unit when good burn conditions became available.

Above: Smoke rises from the Sioux Creek burn unit, surrounded by a deep blackline.

With hot, dry weather forecast on Sunday—a high of 80, with 21 percent humidity—ignitions on the 150-acre Sioux Creek unit began early in the morning so the burn could be completed before the weather became critical. With that done, the entire Loup TRES prescribed fire complex had a deep, black, burned area clear from the north to the south. This set the team up for later burns—in the eastern part of complex with an easterly wind, or the western part of the complex with a westerly wind.

This TRES was conducted entirely on private land, with nine landowners involved. One of those landowners suited up and joined the TRES crew on the fireline the next day, where she learned about ignitions, holding techniques, and how to obtain fire weather. TRES participants greatly valued the eagerness, initiative, energy and local knowledge she added to the crew. The unit she assisted with did not include any of her own property—another beautiful example of cross-boundary cooperation and seeing the larger vision of the Loup TRES program.



A local landowner is welcomed into the TRES crew with a friendly toss led by participants from Spain.

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During the Loup TRES, 17 local ranchers and neighbors joined the TRES crew to complete the 1,585-acre Cedar unit. Many of them were members of the local Custer Prescribed Burn Association, a cooperative group of landowners who help deliver safe and healthy fire to each other's land. This group added valuable personnel and engine resources to the group, and integrated well into the fire learning environment.



At the end of the TRES, the crews and landowners alike were pleased to see healthy fire returned to so many acres of the central Nebraska landscape, most of which had not seen fire since settlement. On the last evening, landowners held an appreciation dinner to thank the TRES participants for all of their hard work. In turn, the participants were grateful to the landowners, as well as the towns of Burwell and Ord, for being such gracious hosts of the 2017 Loup TRES.

The next Loup TRES has been set for March 12-24, 2018!



I am a firm believer that the success of Loup TRES prescribed program has little to do with the raw acres our crew completes, but is rather measured by the actions that occur once our crews leave. I have been delighted to hear several reports that our landowners have accepted the responsibility to continue where we left off. A few days after the TRES, the remaining 500 acres were safely and effectively burned under local direction and cooperation with neighbors. Four separate prescribed fires have also been completed adjacent to 2017 Loup TRES units, further compounding the impact of the TRES. These landowners that have picked up the ball truly represent the Loup TRES vision and the future of fire in central Nebraska.

Ben Wheeler, Pheasants Forever/Loup TRES Coordinator

THANK YOU—the patience and knowledge you shared with me—I can never express my gratitude to you and central Nebraska is blessed to have you! You created team building for us as land owners and our neighborhood that will benefit our community and ecosystem greatly for generations.

Participant Organizations

Bay Mills Indian Community
BRIF
Bureau of Land Management
Castilla la Mancha
Conafor
Firestorm Wildland Fire Suppression, Inc.
Forex
Franktown Fire and Rescue
INFOCA
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Northern Arizona University
Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever
Prometheus Fire Consulting
Sinarms
Spray Creek Ranch
Sugarloaf Fire Protection District
University a Pachingo
University of Washington
USDA Forest Service
Utah Department of Natural Resources
Watershed Research & Training Center



For more on the Loup River TRES:

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For more on other TRES:

<http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>

The Fire Learning Network 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. For more information about PERFECT, contact Lynn Decker: ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.



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v. 25 Apr 17 / Ben Wheeler