



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

TREX Coaches Network Kick-off Workshop

June 19-23, 2017
Brighton, UT

Successful leaders of past TREX events were invited to spend a few days in the mountains near Salt Lake City, Utah this past June. This trip wasn't for burning, though—they were there to share their experience and knowledge, and build a foundation for further expansion and improvements of this strategy for growing good fire. Thirty-three people—NGO staff, private contractors and government employees—came from around the country and around the world to kick off a TREX Coaches Network.

This network will create deliberate connections between the numerous TREX leaders who year after year plan, coordinate and lead a suite of TREX events. When these leaders are better connected to each other, they can better support one another, and better serve their own communities and the larger fire community.



Night operations at the 2011 Kansas TREX
Photo: USFS (Dennis Carril)

Since 2008, when the first Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges took place, more than 60 TREX have been held—and 22 are planned for this year alone. The PERFECT team is now at a turning point. Current capacity to mentor and coach new TREX leaders and organizers is limited because

there are only a few people in advisor or coach roles; these few people are trying to provide consistent coaching to an increasing number of landscapes across the country. As TREX become more widely known and valued for their strong experiential training, and as more TREX events are added, a larger cadre of leaders and coaches is needed. This cadre will come from the group of people who have dealt with the unique challenges of hosting a TREX; through the new network, they will be available to provide support, advice and encouragement to leaders who are taking on the task for the first or second time.

If you've ever planned, coordinated or led a training exchange then you know already: TREX events are rewarding—but can be a lot work

for the person pulling it all together. The work is a combination of soft skills and technical skills, ranging from recruiting private land owners or government managers to host burns, to discussing how liability will be mitigated, to arranging meals and lodging contracts, to creating automated application forms, or even to modeling fire behavior or making maps. TREX leaders have to be well-rounded, capable of having an impossibly big vision, but also of being able to work on that vision in concrete and deliberate ways.

The TREX Coaches Network will help TREX grow—supporting current and future leaders so they can provide the consistent, high quality experiential training experience that TREX events are known for. With more leaders,

What Does a TREX Leader Do?

What *don't* they do? TREX leaders organize planning calls, take notes and follow up with other leaders. They apply for or review grant proposals, and coordinate with attorneys so they can execute a fire management agreement. They answer hundreds of questions from prospective hosts and participants, and recruit people for the Incident Management Team. They organize the participants and solicit for extra equipment like engines or PPE. TREX Coaches also ensure there are enough burn plans, prepped burn units, burn bosses, lodging and meals for everyone. They help develop talking points for firefighters, send out invitations to the media, and talk to reporters. TREX leaders send out final instructions to the participants and try to make sure that everyone has reasonable expectations. They organize the burn teams, and are on site, shaking hands and making introductions on the first day.

And then the TREX gets started.

A firing team made up of international participants refuels drip torches at the 2014 Spanish-language TRES. © TNC (Jeremy Bailey)



Blacklining at the 2017 Niobrara TRES in Nebraska

© TNC (Chad Bladow)

TRES can be used in more places, with deeper local grounding, allowing diverse teams of participants to accomplish important work while receiving valuable training.

Many of the people at this workshop have experience leading an annual TRES on their home landscape. Others have traveled elsewhere to lead a TRES. Still others haven't yet taken the lead on a TRES, but seem to be at every TRES offered. It's clear when several members of a TRES Incident Management Team have TRES experience from other places, and very helpful—to have others who know what TRES

expectations are, and have experience untangling a misunderstanding about Position Task Books, or understand the value of field trips with participants, and are used to the numerous other aspects that make TRES unique.

The TRES Coaches Network will provide this kind of support for TRES organizers at a different level—and all through the planning process. The network will also support TRES leaders by collecting best practices, and providing helpful manuals, call lists, learning sessions—and access to other coaches who might be interested in joining their TRES events.

Like a TRES, the workshop was set up so that everyone was a teacher, and everyone a learner. Some participants were assigned to give presentations on various important elements of the TRES planning process. Others facilitated discussions on key topics, or guided sessions on lessons learned and best practices. By the end of the few days together, leaders and coaches had become familiar with the full range of TRES events and the nuances of opportunities and challenges presented. More than one very experienced leader was heard to say "Oh, I've never thought to do it that way—that's a good idea."

With this accomplished, the TRES Coaches Network is now official. As Jeremy Bailey noticed, "You can now look forward to seeing experienced TRES leaders from Nebraska sharing what they know with colleagues from California, you'll also learn that experienced staff from Indiana and South Carolina will be working in Oregon and Washington helping as part of their local IMT during spring TRES, you'll hear about TRES coaches traveling abroad and you'll learn more about our growing community of International TRES leaders."

And you can expect to see more TRES.

For more information about the TRES Coaches Network:

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For TRES information online:

<http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>

For links to information about upcoming TRES:

<http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/HabitatProtectionandRestoration/Training/TrainingExchanges/Pages/Upcoming-Training-Exchanges.aspx>

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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