



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Yurok TRES

February 11-17, 2018

Weitchpec, CA

Restoring the land that supports the cultural practices of the local tribes while building the NWCG qualifications of participants is what Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TRES) are all about on the lower Klamath River. Thirty-two people took part in the Cultural Fire Management Council Yurok TRES during a small burn window in February. Participant skill levels ranged from brand new entry-level firefighter (FFT2) trainees on their first fire assignment to a burn boss (RXB2) trainee. Over the course of the TRES, the group of fire practitioners from ten organizations came together to form a cohesive unit that built a level of trust and cooperation almost beyond understanding. "These guys are solid fire fighters. I would charge hell with a bucket of water with these guys," said one participant.

The week started with a visit to a ceremonial dance site so participants could gain understanding about the Yurok worldview. They then headed over to the first burn unit to familiarize themselves with the terrain and learn about culturally significant plants in the unit that would benefit from fire. Of particular interest were the hazel bushes growing profusely throughout the unit. Hazel is a serotinous plant—it needs fire to generate new shoots—and these new shoots are what is needed to continue the ancient art of basket weaving in Yurok country.

Over the course of the TRES, participants learned about traditional and contemporary use of prescribed fire, and gained experience using various firing techniques in steep mountainous terrain, and in holding, mop up, safety protocols and leadership skills. Together they burned approximately 30 acres of land, improving wildlife habitat, reducing noxious weeds, and ensuring basket weavers have hazel to weave with for another year.

After a week of burning and learning together, the community joined the fire lighters for a dinner of salmon cooked on sticks, eels roasted on the coals, acorn soup (which participants helped to prepare) and fry bread. These traditional foods set the tone for an evening of appreciation and gratitude for a job well done. Fire has returned to the Yurok People!



From top: Flower Dancers perform a dance demonstration as they join the community in welcoming the fire lighters to Yurok country. Low intensity fire burns through the hazel bushes to create new shoots to be used for basket weaving. A young mom with her baby and students from the local school come to learn about fire.

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For more information about the Yurok TRES, contact:

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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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v. 9 Mar 18 / Margo Robbins