



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

A TREX Tale Unfolds: Daily Updates from the Cascadia TREX

Cle Elum, WA ~ September 23-October 5, 2018

This edition of Notes is based on the daily updates sent from organizers of the Cascadia Prescribed Fire Training Exchange over the course of the event. The training included 21 participants from Colorado, Oregon, Utah, Washington and British Columbia, who were joined on burns by about 20 state and local fire personnel.

September 25

The 2018 Cascadia TREX officially started on Sunday with an orientation to the program and a history of fire and prescribed burning in Washington. Yesterday, TREX partners—staff from the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and Kittitas County Conservation District—introduced themselves and their work. Staff from the Cle Elum Ranger District led participants on a field tour of the Liberty burn units, looking at past burns and future projects, and discussing the challenges of burning in this landscape. If the weather

cooperates, the TREX crew will have an opportunity to burn one of the Liberty units with the Cle Elum Ranger District crew.

The crew also toured private property adjacent to the town of Roslyn, a portion of which was burned during last year's TREX, and where we will be looking to burn if conditions are right.

Today, the TREX crew attended an all-day burn plan workshop led by a qualified burn boss. This workshop guided them through an essential step to prescribed burning: planning the burn. They learned how to analyze a unit, develop objectives, assess the complexity of a potential burn, collect necessary data, work with fire behavior software, and more.



As part of the burn plan workshop, the TREX crew conducts a site visit on private property, surveying the site as if it were a potential burn unit and planning how they would implement such a burn.

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September 26

Partners in Kittitas County have decided to hold off on burning this week due to weather conditions. With local burning on hold, the TREX crew left early this morning for two separate burn opportunities elsewhere in the state. Some people are heading south to burn with the Naches Ranger District as they build on a successful burn from Monday in the pine forests of Eastern Washington. The rest of the TREX crew is heading west over the mountains to burn with partners at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in the endangered prairies, oak woodlands and pine forests of the South Puget Sound region; this TREX crew will support the work of base fire staff and local partners as they implement burns for habitat restoration, endangered species conservation, wildfire risk reduction, and to support the military mission of the base.



TREX participants a tour Liberty burn units and discuss prescribed fire techniques with Cle Elum Ranger District fire staff.

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The firing boss trainee on a Joint Base Lewis-McChord burn discusses burn operations.

© TNC (Chad Bladow)

September 27

The TREX crew had a successful day burning yesterday with Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), where they completed two burns (about 90 acres)—the first burn day of Cascadia TREX! A huge thanks to the base and their staff for accommodating and providing this great training opportunity. Today, TREX is headed back to South Sound to continue burning with JBLM. The TREX crew hopes to complete a burn unit as the primary resource under a qualified Department of Defense burn boss.

Two TREX crew members also went to support Naches Ranger District today. While the district did not end up burning, the TREX participants learned about the district's prescribed fire program, and will bring those lessons learned back to their home agencies.

September 28

The crew accomplished a 24-acre burn at JBLM yesterday. The burn, overseen by a JBLM qualified burn boss, was run primarily by the TREX crew, and was conducted to support habitat restoration and endangered species conservation in a high priority prairie area.

TREX has participants from five states and one Canadian province, and from eight agencies. With so many different organizations coming together, it can take some time for the crew to find its rhythm. The burns over the last few days have been important for crew cohesion, and of course great learning opportunities for everyone!

We are headed back to JBLM today to burn with JBLM fire staff. Due to smoke management concerns, they will be focusing on a smaller-acreage burn today.



The burn boss trainee leads the TREX crew through the operational briefing for a burn.

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Cascadia TREX and JBLM fire crews work together on burn operations on the base.

© Eric Kiehn

September 29

Yesterday TREX had another successful training day with JBLM. The crews burned a 9-acre prairie unit and conducted some burning along the forest edges, working towards opening up more habitat in the transition zone

between prairie and forest. This was the last day of burning with JBLM, so the TREX crew headed back over to Cle Elum in the evening.

This morning, TREX is focused on a radio programming class. This skill is particularly important as we work with many different partners, each with their own communication plan and channels. The crew will also begin to prep the Roslyn Ridge unit; this will include installing hose lays and portable water tanks. If the weather cooperates, there is a potential for a small burn at Roslyn Ridge on Sunday.



A TREX crew member installs a hose lay at Roslyn Ridge in preparation for prescribed burning operations at the site. © Eric Kiehn

September 30

The TREX crew—along with additional resources from Kittitas County Fire District 1, Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue and the Roslyn Fire Department—are planning on burning an 8-acre unit today. This will serve as a training exercise, and will also help restore forest health and reduce fuels and future wildfire risk around the town of Roslyn. The unit in question is directly north of Roslyn and adjacent to the Roslyn Urban Forest. Smoke may be visible from town.

While the state and county are currently under a burn ban, the landowner and TREX have received an exception to burn given our qualified, trained personnel and resources. There will be multiple engines and water resources on site, and contingency resources are on hand.

October 1

Yesterday the TREX crew and local resources completed the 8-acre burn at the Roslyn Ridge site. It was a great learning opportunity to integrate local fire department personnel and the TREX crew—both TREX participants and local districts received training—and some good fire was put on the landscape to help with future wildfires and restore forest health. Huge thanks for the local districts supporting TREX and prescribed fire!

Smoke was visible from town during the burn yesterday, but dispersed to the northwest. Some smoke had settled into town during the night, but has cleared out as the day progressed. There will likely be some smoke again tonight and in the morning, but it should be minimal.



Smoke from the Roslyn Ridge prescribed burn, just north of the City of Roslyn, can be seen from downtown during burn operations.

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The TREX crew went back to the Roslyn Ridge site this morning to monitor and patrol the burn. There will be no burning at the Roslyn Ridge site tomorrow, as an event is scheduled in the area. TREX will continue to monitor and patrol, and may look for burning opportunities at the burn site in the second half of the week.

October 2

Yesterday, TREX continued mop-up and patrol on the Roslyn Ridge burn from September 30, securing the edges of the unit. While mop-up isn't the most glamorous part of prescribed burning, it's essential to our responsibility when we put fire on the ground. Today the TREX crew is headed back out to continue patrol and mop-up on the burn. There is a large trail-building event in the area just north of the burn, so there will be no new burns today. The crew will also be preparing additional units to burn tomorrow and Thursday, and will run through field exercises and discussions about ignition techniques to expand upon their learning from the past week.



Digging out hot-spots and smokes helps secure the prescribed burn containment lines during mop-up.

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October 2

The event occurring today near the Roslyn Ridge burn has more than 300 attendees; they are working on maintaining a system of trails throughout these forests, thereby increasing connectedness and recreational opportunities across multiple ownerships. The Roslyn Ridge burn will be visible and TREX will be on site to patrol the burn. Our communities are closely tied to the recreational opportunities provided by our forests in Washington. Returning good fire to these landscapes not only protects our communities and forests, but protects our ability to enjoy these forests into the future.



Crew members review firing techniques while developing a plan for one of the Roslyn Ridge units. © WA RC&D (Kara Karboski)

October 3

Yesterday, amid high winds, the crew continued patrol and mop-up of the Roslyn Ridge burn; the unit held well. Crews also worked together to develop a plan for a larger unit and began preparations for the burn. This morning, the TREX crew is heading out to conduct a 33-acre burn at Roslyn Ridge, with additional resources from Kittitas County Fire District 1, the Seattle Fire Department and Washington Department of Natural



A meeting of the minds during one of the burns at Roslyn Ridge.

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Resources. This burn will support the training objectives of TREX, reduce wildfire risk around Roslyn, and work towards restoring forest health.

In addition, two TREX participants are working elsewhere today. One trainee is headed to the Cle Elum Ranger District to support operations on their Orion project. And one of our fire effects monitoring trainees went down to the Oak Creek Wildlife Area to work with staff setting up monitoring plots that help Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife determine the effects of fire on the forest.

October 4

Yesterday, TREX and partners mobilized to burn 33 acres at Roslyn Ridge. However, rain the night before left fuels too damp and a burn would not have met objectives. Today, the TREX crew and partners from Kittitas County Fire District 1, Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue and Washington Department of Natural Resources will attempt the burn again (the Seattle department was unable to return today). Winds are favorable to move smoke away from town. This is the last operational day for Cascadia TREX and we hope to leave it on a high note.



The TREX crew and partners from Seattle Fire Department, Kittitas County Fire District 1 and Washington Department of Natural Resources gather around to hear about the status of the burn from the burn boss trainee.

© John Marshall

October 5

What a way to cap the week! Yesterday the TREX crew—with partners from Kittitas County Fire District 1, Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue and Washington Department of Natural Resources—burned 33 acres at Roslyn Ridge. In addition, one TREX crew member assisted the Cle Elum Ranger District on a 46-acre burn.

We also had increased media attention, with several TV and news outlets on site, as well as staff from the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest and a visit from Washington Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz. We're excited to have her support and leadership, and that of her staff, as we tackle these challenges.

The 2018 TREX crew has now disbanded, dispersing across the state, country, and a few back to Canada. I hope it was as great of a learning opportunity for them as it was for me.

Thanks

We close with thanks, to everyone who supported Cascadia TREX—from participants and their agencies, to our funders at the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Washington Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy and Fire Learning Network. Thanks to the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Washington Resource Conservation & Development Council, and Kittitas County Conservation District for their continued support.

And a final special thanks to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue, Kittitas County Fire District 1, Cle Elum Fire Department, Roslyn Fire Department, Washington Department of Natural Resources and Seattle Fire Department for supporting and

participating in our burn efforts at Roslyn Ridge. All were an essential part of a successful training. There are so many more that have made this effort possible, and I hope the work and experience over the past few weeks moves us towards more resilient forests and communities.

Participant Organizations

British Columbia Wildfire Service (Canada)

Bureau of Land Management—Front Range District Fire Unit (CO); Vale District Office (OR)

City of Roslyn Fire Department (WA)

Kittitas County Fire District #1 (WA)

National Park Service—North Cascades National Park (WA)

North Cascades Smokejumpers (WA)

The Nature Conservancy (IN)

USDA Forest Service — Wasatch-Cache National Forest (UT)

Washington Department of Natural Resources—Northeast Region, Pacific Cascade Region, Southeast Region

Washington Prescribed Fire Council

West Pierce Fire & Rescue (WA)

For more about the Cascadia TREX:

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For more on the TREX strategy:

<http://nature.ly/trainingexchanges>

The Fire Learning Network and Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) 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. For more information about PERFECT, contact Marek Smith at marek_smith@tnc.org.

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v. 21 December 2018/K. Karboski