



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Prescribed Fire Training Exchange: Week 1 Wrap-up

September 2013

Santa Fe National Forest, New Mexico

“It’s a real treat to be here when everything is green and lush, and the clouds are low. A real treat.”

With those words, Jeremy Bailey and the 27 exchange participants headed out on the first of several 6:00 a.m. hikes. The overnight

rain had just ended. Everyone was “fire-ready,” tools in hand and headlamps affixed to their helmets.

During the first week of the training exchange, morning hikes have helped participants acclimate to the elevation. Lectures and field exercises have covered ignition

techniques, shelter deployment, first aid, fire line construction, radio use and weather. Local fire experts have dropped by in the evenings to share their perspectives, and there have been day-long field trips to visit wildfire burned areas as well as areas treated with thinning and burning. Participants have also



Clockwise from upper left: Participants test radio protocols outside the Valles Caldera Science and Education Center in Jemez Springs. Several crew members practice digging fireline in Valles Caldera National Preserve. Team building exercises were integrated into morning hikes. The group has a question and answer session with a crew monitoring a burn unit on the Santa Fe National Forest. © TNC/Wendy Fulks

given detailed presentations about fire management issues from the countries where they work, and woven through it all have been lively discussions on a variety of topics.

On Friday, before a visit to scout the Mesa Camino burn unit in the Coyote Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest, the district ranger addressed the group, highlighting the importance of the partnership with these training exchanges. He also discussed the need for a more vibrant wood products industry in the area. The group proceeded to Mesa Camino, which is in a remote part of the state, east of the town of Cuba, and more than two hours from Santa Fe by car, and in spite of a week that started with local flash-flooding, were able to put a little smoke in the air. Learning from this exercise was captured during the evening's after action review.

Sunny weather over the weekend continued to dry out burn units, so the crews prepared to spend the second week of the exchange burning on Borrego Mesa, just north of New Mexico's capital, Santa Fe.



The ignition crew lights a test fire and observes its behavior while scouting the Mesa Camino burn unit on the Santa Fe National Forest. © TNC/Wendy Fulks

After a day in the field scouting the burn unit, the crew gathered for a group photo. Participants in this training exchange bring experience from eight foreign countries—Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Portugal and Spain—and seven U.S. states—Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, North Carolina, New Mexico and Utah. © TNC/Wendy Fulks



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