



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Prescribed Fire Training Exchange Niobrara Valley Preserve

Week One: March 8-15, 2014

As we complete day ten of the prescribed fire training exchange at Niobrara Valley Preserve in north-central Nebraska, we are excited to share with you just a few of our initial activities and successes. The first half of this two-week training event involved more than 50 people from 16 states and one international participant. Numerous state, federal and private agencies and organizations are heavily involved with this event—planning, supporting, burning, teaching and learning. In addition to some great practice and burn preparation, we've experienced multiple opportunities to safely put fire on the ground. The past several days included orientation, familiarization with crews and equipment, developing appropriate local tactical strategies, scouting



burn units, and conducting firing operations (which included experience controlling a rare 10:00 p.m. slop-over.)

Both trainers and trainees continue working hard to accomplish training objectives. A few of the opportunities so far at this year's TREX include two NWCG courses (S131 Firefighter One and S133 Look Up, Look Down, Look Around) as well as discussions and practice in:

- Operational differences across the U.S.
- Delivering effective briefings
- Interviewing and the media
- Fire weather and fire effects reporting
- Firing/ignitions
- Wetline operations
- Great Plains grassland conservation

Above: Eastern redcedar that have encroached on grasslands at Pine Glen WMA are treated with fire.

Left: Crews work at the Caniday Unit at the Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve.

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Above and below: Students from Stephen F. Austin State University take part in nighttime burning operations at Pine Glen WMA © TNC/Guy Duffner

- Risk management
 - Orienteering/land navigation
 - Fire adapted communities
- Participants have also had numerous opportunities for Position Task Book evaluations.

The next generation of conservationists really is taking fire leadership seriously. We experienced this firsthand as we hosted three young, motivated Student Association for Fire Ecology (SAFE) students from Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas. They were able to assist with ignitions, holding the line on the burn at Pine Glen Unit 2 on their last night at TREX. As they headed out the door and back to school, they asked when the next TREX would be held, and whether they could participate. Their enthusiasm was contagious!

Looking Ahead

Over the past week, we've taken advantage of brief, sporadic windows of favorable weather condi-

tions and conducted several days (and nights) of successful controlled burning in these fire-thirsty Nebraska landscapes. We've completed two of our scheduled burns, and prepped three units, so we are primed to accomplish even more in the coming week as windows of opportunity present themselves.

To assist with the upcoming burns, nearly 50 additional university students from SAFE programs from Colorado State University, Humboldt State University, Northern Arizona University and the University of Idaho have joined our ranks. Most of these students are experiencing fire for the first time.

In the coming days, TREX participants have several thousand acres of controlled burning to complete. The mix of brand new students and seasoned veterans of fire makes for a terrific teaching and learning environment.

Stay tuned as things heat up!



Niobrara Valley Training Exchange Partners



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The Fire Learning Network (FLN) and Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network are part of the *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience through Collaboration: Landscapes, Learning and Restoration*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information, contact Lynn Decker at ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.



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