



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Yurok Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

Weitchpec, CA May/June 2014

The Yurok Tribe of Indians in the Klamath Mountains of northern California is hosting a ten-day prescribed fire training exchange. The Tribe's Cultural Fire Management Committee has prepared a series of burn units that, once burned, will help produce better basket-

making materials. Long known for their incredible basketry skills, the Yurok use numerous native plants found along the Klamath River to construct and color their baskets. The Yurok have managed culturally important plants like hazel (*Corylus cornuta*) with fire for millennia.

The training exchange started with a boat ride down river along the Klamath, where resource managers from the Tribe pointed out different vegetation communities, discussed observed changes since the removal of fire from the landscape and also identified village sites and places where traditional dances and other important ceremonies still occur. At one point, the boat beached along a stand of willows and one of the women disembarked, reached into the water and pulled out some of the long, thin, red roots from the shoreline willows; cutting them with a knife she talked about how these would be used for baskets. In addition to the orientation boat ride and tours of the planned burn units, the training exchange management team also spent a day with tribal leaders hearing about the different management and cultural practices of the Tribe. The meeting opened with a song and dance, and a prayer of thanks, followed by a welcoming presentation from the chairman of the Tribe.

Firefighters from federal and state agencies and NGOs as well as the Tribe's fire crew are taking part in this exchange. Participants will be working with Tribal elders and learning about the history and cultural practices of the Yurok, as well as hearing from local scientists, ecologists and private land owners who are cooperating with the Tribe.

Left: An informational flyer about the training and burning has been posted in community post offices, general stores and the like.

The Fire Learning Network is supported by *Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency 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 about the FLN, contact Lynn Decker at ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524



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v. 27 May 14/Jeremy Bailey



Yurok Hwy 169 Prescribed Fire Project



The Yurok Tribe in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Firestorm Inc., Yurok Forestry/Wildland Fire, the Cultural Fire Management Council, Northern California Indian Development Council and the U.S. Forest Service will be conducting a series of controlled burns designed to restore natural habitats, reduce hazardous forest accumulations and train wildland firefighters. The project's intent is to conduct cultural restoration burns designed to help native

basket weavers obtain weaving materials, begin restoring natural prairie openings and to create defensible space from future wildfires for local landowners.

The Cultural Fire Management Council has identified several burn units on the Highway 169 corridor from approximately Weitchpec School Road to Coon Creek. Burning is scheduled to begin on Tuesday May 27th and continuing until approximately June 4th as weather and burning conditions allow.

Fire crews will be working in these areas with fire equipment and personnel on Highway 169 and some of the adjoining roads. Smokey conditions may be present and the public is asked to please drive carefully in the prescribed fire area during these times.

The Cultural Fire Management Council is committed to helping restore cultural and ecological health and sustainability within Yurok ancestral territory. These prescribed fire units have been selected because they are known for weaving materials and other culturally important considerations. We envision that the training local fire crews will receive could eventually lead to the Yurok Tribe's capability to independently conduct cultural burns, resulting in a healthier environment for wildlife and public safety.



This training is hosted by the Fire Learning Network, Yurok Tribe and Firestorm Inc. The Fire Learning Network is a cooperative program of the Forest Service, Department of the Interior agencies and The Nature Conservancy with a ten-year track record of helping to restore our nation's forests and grasslands and making communities safer from fire.

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