



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network Fire Learning Network National Workshops

June 2-6, 2014

Colorado Springs, CO

More than 60 people from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network and Fire Learning Network met in overlapping workshops in Colorado Springs during the first week of June. In the first part of the week, members of the young FAC network discussed key issues they face, learned about a community self-assessment tool now in development, and then began laying out their work for the upcoming year. Midweek, the two networks met together for the first time, in a poster session and field tour, to share ideas across the networks

and build connections between the two networks. In the latter part of the week, the FLN reflected on its work over the last several years, and then spent some time working on a vision for the next several years.

In the words of one participant, the workshop was “like a pit stop for me to refuel, put on new tires, and go back out and continue the race. After a while we all run low on gas so this was what I needed to get me back up to speed. We have already laid plans for the next FAC project in the county to our south.”



Billy Snipes gave a presentation on lessons learned about collaboration and partnership. Leaders from two FAC hub organizations were asked to give introductory talks on each of the six themes that were addressed by the group (see box).

Reflections on the week ...

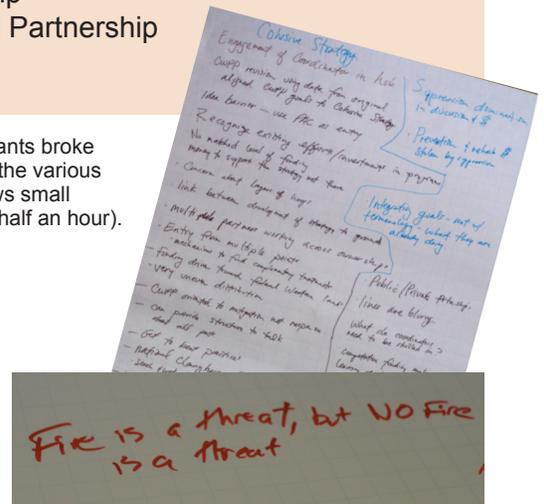
At one point, FAC Learning Network leader Nick Goulette asked us to suspend our disbelief—that really stuck with me because I felt like that’s what we are all asking people to do. We’re asking them to change and to adapt. And in order to get there, they have to suspend their disbelief long enough to make space for the change.

Annie Schmidt
Director, Chumstick Wildfire
Stewardship Coalition
Leavenworth, WA

Fire Adapted Communities: Presentation & World Cafe Themes

- Fire Department Roles and Models
- State-Level Partnerships
- Integrating Cohesive Strategy Goals in Planning & Implementation
- Ground-Up Grassroots Leadership
- Lessons about Collaboration and Partnership
- Regional Networking Systems

Following the introductory presentations, participants broke into small groups to discuss questions related to the various themes in a “world cafe” format. This format allows small groups to have rich discussions (in this case, for half an hour).





On Wednesday evening, the Fire Learning Network arrived, and joined the FAC Learning Network for a joint poster session. The session was one of the highlights of the week, combining a game that helped everyone get to know the full range of landscapes and communities in both networks with opportunities to catch up with old friends and make some new connections.

Above: Almost the whole group—missing only a couple of people on weather-delayed planes.

Below (clockwise from top left): David Burchfield, a University of Colorado graduate student studying the FAC network, explains the rules of the game, wherein each project used its poster and persuasive powers to convince others to invest in it; Annie Schmidt of the Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition accepts the prize for the highest-earning FAC (Jeremy Bailey took the prize for high-scoring FLN with the prescribed fire training exchanges); Chris Topik (director of TNC's Restoring America's Forests) and Forest Service social scientist Sarah McCaffrey got a few words in; Nathan Korb stands ready to pitch his work in the Centennial Valley FLN; Will Harling (Western Klamath Mountains FLN and northern California FAC) and Marek Smith (Central Appalachians FLN) catch up; and Jeff Kwasny (FireScope Monterey FLN), researcher Bruce Goldstein and Annie Schmidt share ideas.



Reflections on the week ...

Someone at the workshop said “If you still have a culture of fire, don’t lose it.” This really resonated with me, and I’ve shared it with some partners since I came home. We’re on that cusp now in our landscape, and this was a great reminder of what we have, and need to protect.”

Marek Smith
 Director, Allegheny Highlands Program, TNC
 Central Appalachians Fire Learning Network

Participating Agencies & Organizations

- Ashland Fire and Rescue
- Austin Fire Department
- Baker County Fire Department
- Barnegat Fire Company
- Boise Fire Department
- Bureau of Land Management
- California Fire Safe Council
- Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation & Development Council
- Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition
- Coalition for the Upper South Platte
- Deschutes County
- Dovetail Partners
- FireWise of Southwest Colorado
- Flagstaff Fire Department
- Florida State Forest Service
- Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership
- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- Island Park Sustainable Fire Community
- Karuk Tribe
- Mercer County Soil Conservation District
- Mid-Klamath Watershed Council
- North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District
- Ojai Fire Safe Council
- Project Wildfire
- Santa Fe County Wildland Fire
- Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative
- Summit County Wildfire Council
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
- The Forest Guild
- The Nature Conservancy—Arkansas, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, Washington
- The Watershed Center
- Towns County FAC Citizens’ Coalition
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- USDA Forest Service



On Thursday morning, the two networks got together again, this time for a field tour and learning exchange hosted by Jon Bruno of the FAC Learning Network hub organization Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) and several community partners. The trip included a stop to learn about post-fire restoration and flood mitigation after the Waldo Fire (*top row*). This was followed by a visit to the Forest Edge neighborhood (*lower left*), where WUI challenges were discussed in the yard of a home that demonstrated significant mitigation while a local TV crew filmed. The morning wrapped up at the Sourdough restoration and fuels mitigation project, where a lively discussion of whether thinning alone would meet goals continued as people returned to the buses (*lower right*).



On Thursday afternoon, the FLN enjoyed a working lunch in the field, followed by an after action review of the last four years of work under the PERC agreement—a chance to step back, look at the five-year outcomes, and ask whether we got there and how, what worked and didn't, and what was missing. These insights were captured and then used to inform the discussion on Friday morning, when FLN leads and key partners addressed the question, Where do we want to go next?



Reflections on the week ...

What I saw at the workshop was that no matter what part of the country we live in, we all live with the risk of a wildfire, some higher than others, but the risk is always there. A wildfire that destroys 400 homes or just one is a tragedy, just the same, for the people involved.

The common thread and goal of the FAC Learning Network is to share information, ideas, successes, failures, and help each other better learn how to keep our citizens safe from the threat of wildfire and help them be prepared for it and know what to do when it does arrive in their neighborhood ...

Frank Riley
Executive Director,
Chestatee/Chattahoochee
RC&D Council
Towns County, GA

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Reflections on the week ...

After being an engaged member of the Fire Learning Network for eight years, what struck me is the how proximate, but distant, the space between resilient landscapes (FLN) and urban interface (FAC) is—and how much benefit for communities and native landscapes can be gained by our shared experience, insight, and collective actions.

Reese Lolley
Director of Eastern Washington Forests Program, TNC
Washington Dry Forests FLN

The Fire Learning Network (FLN) and Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) Learning Network are part of the *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.



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