



## Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

# Ashland Prescribed Fire Training Exchange: A View from Above

## Ashland, OR—May 9-21, 2016

From its sunny beginning to its musical close, this 12-day event was highlighted by restorative prescribed fire treatments implemented by participants; social license built through community engagement and outreach; and learning through open dialogue, mentoring, and most importantly, camaraderie.

More than half of the participants in the Ashland TRES were using vacation time, leave without pay or were just volunteering their time—and this included participants at all levels, from the Incident Management Team to first-time firefighters. We are honored by this commitment from these people and from their spouses and families—we know the sacrifice it takes to attend and are grateful for their efforts. Thank you. Thanks are also due to the work units that made TRES a priority.

The focus of this TRES, the first in Ashland, was the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project area, which serves as the city of Ashland's municipal water supply. But modules were also dispatched to both lead and assist with burns throughout the Rogue Basin. They were able to engage with local experts about fire ecology,



A firefighter from England lights a unit. In addition to numerous local participants, the diverse team included members from six other U.S. states, Spain, and from Guanajuato, Ashland's sister city in Mexico.  
© Chad Graeve



A student from Oregon State University got a chance to fill a key role on a private-land burn. The landowner was connected to the TRES through his work with the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, helping tie the efforts more closely. © TNC/Jeremy Bailey

### Participant Organizations

Ashland Fire & Rescue  
Atira GST Inc.  
Bureau of Indian Affairs—Southern Paiute Agency  
Bomberos Voluntarios (Mexico)  
Bureau of Land Management—Medford  
Dorset Fire and Rescue (England)  
Grayback Forestry  
Guanajuato Volunteer Fire Department (Mexico)  
Jackson County Fire Department (Oregon)  
Key Peninsula Fire Department (Washington)  
Loamakatsi Restoration Project Management of Environment (Spain)  
Oregon State University  
Oregon Woods Inc.  
Orting Valley Fire and Rescue (Washington)  
Pottawattamie County (Iowa)  
Sinar Mas (Spain)  
Siskiyou Permaculture (Oregon)  
The Nature Conservancy—Maine, Oregon, Utah  
USDA Forest Service—Gifford Pinchot, Plumas and Rogue-Siskiyou NFs  
Westminster Fire Department (Colorado)  
Private practitioners and landowners

### The Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project

Ashland is a town of 21,000 nestled in the Rogue Valley where the Siskiyou and Cascade Mountains meet. It is a community of creative, innovative people who care about their environment. The Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project (AFR) grew from this. It is a collaborative partnership established between the U.S. Forest Service, City of Ashland, Lomakatsi Restoration Project and The Nature Conservancy, with initial monitoring program support from the National Forest Foundation. The partners collaborate with university faculty and students, interested citizens and other local organizations. The community and Forest Service effectively designed AFR as a ten-year stewardship project to reduce the risk of severe wildfire in the watershed to protect water quality, older forests, wildlife, people, property and quality of life. It is an unprecedented plan in which the city of Ashland is proactively restoring and protecting their watershed for future generations with prescribed fire techniques.



TRES leaders and burn boss trainees scout burn units.

Credit: Jennifer Harris/USFS



TREX smoke, from Ashland. © Eduardo Luna Lira

and about the partnerships and collaboration currently underway through the work of the Oregon Fire Learning Network, Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative and the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project. The variety of fuels and terrain, and diversity of land ownership and burn objectives, led to a rich experience for the team.

**Reactions from local fire managers** and burn bosses turned from curious to enthusiastic once they realized what TREX participants had to offer. By the second week, requests were being received for more modules than could be provided. Fuel conditions and weather aligned, so the increased capacity that TREX brought resulted in more acres burned than could otherwise have been accomplished. In particular, the work done on private lands would not have been possible without TREX participants stepping in to prepare units and implement burns. All told, the TREX participants completed 10 burns—on BLM, Forest Service and two private units—totaling 338 acres.

**The opportunity to engage** was enhanced by active social networking, and partnership with the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project, Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest and Ashland Fire and Rescue communication teams. Local media were escorted to active burn units and given opportunities to interview participants. Photos of people and fire flooded the Ashland Forest Resiliency TREX Facebook page. Stories on the radio, TV and in the newspaper shed light on what could only be described as the Cohesive Strategy in action—people taking an “all hands, all lands” approach, working together across geographic boundaries and cultural divides toward a common goal of working and living with fire.

## Getting the Word Out

Like all TREX, the Ashland TREX engaged with media to make sure those in the area knew what was going on—and why it was important. Coverage ranged from basic facts about the timing and location of burns to a 20-minute radio interview that went into more depth. Response was good, as controlled burning is a hot topic in this wildfire-prone area.

May 10

*Ashland Daily Tidings*, “Controlled Burns Planned in Ashland Area”  
<http://www.dailytidings.com/article/20160510/NEWS/160519981/>

May 11

*Jefferson Public Radio*, “Training for Prescribed Burns” (20 minute interview with Chris Chambers and Robert Gazzard)  
<http://ijpr.org/post/training-prescribed-burns#stream/0>

*KDVR.com*, “Prescribed Burning to Produce Visible Smoke in the Rogue Valley”

[http://www.kdrv.com/news/local/Prescribed\\_Burning\\_to\\_Produce\\_Visible\\_Smoke\\_in\\_the\\_Rogue\\_Valley.html](http://www.kdrv.com/news/local/Prescribed_Burning_to_Produce_Visible_Smoke_in_the_Rogue_Valley.html)

May 12

*Ashland Daily Tidings*, “Controlled Burn near Hyatt Lake” (photo gallery)  
[http://www.dailytidings.com/photogallery/DT/20160512/PHOTO\\_GALLERY/512009999/PH/1](http://www.dailytidings.com/photogallery/DT/20160512/PHOTO_GALLERY/512009999/PH/1)

May 13

*KOBI5 (NBC)*, “Prescribed Burns in Hills above Ashland”  
<https://kobi5.com/news/prescribed-burns-in-hills-above-ashland-27408/>

May 15

*Mail Tribune*, “Firefighters Converge in Ashland to Light Controlled Burns in order to Prevent Wildfire”  
<http://www.mailtribune.com/article/20160514/news/160519753>

May 16

*Ashland Daily Tidings*, “Firefighters Come to Ashland for Wildland Fire Training”  
<http://www.dailytidings.com/news/20160516/firefighters-come-to-ashland-for-wildland-fire-training>

May 17

*Ashland Daily Tidings*, “Controlled Burns could Leave Parts of Ashland Smoky”  
<http://www.dailytidings.com/news/20160517/controlled-burns-could-leave-parts-of-ashland-smoky>

*Ashland Daily Tidings*, “Our View: Fighting Fire with Fire”  
<http://www.dailytidings.com/article/20160517/OPINION/160519850/>

**Social media** was also used to good effect, with an a page on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AshlandTREX2016/>) posting links to media stories and other relevant information—as well as lots of photos of good fire, and good people using it.

For more about the **Ashland TREX** or **Ashland Forest Resiliency Project**, contact:

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Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) are part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together* (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

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