



## LIVING WITH FIRE

# Burning Together, Learning Together

## Bringing the TREX Model to the North Coast

By Lenya Quinn-Davidson

This fall, the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council will be hosting a unique training event in our region. The two-week prescribed fire training exchange, or TREX, will bring fire managers, students, private landowners, and other interested individuals—local, out of state, and maybe even international—to northwestern California to share and build

their experience in prescribed fire practices and fire effects. The TREX will take place from October 21 – November 3, and will involve up to 30 participants with a wide range of backgrounds and experience levels. Participants will work with local agencies and organizations, including Redwood National Park, the Bureau of Land Management, the Watershed Research and Training Center, and the Mid Klamath

Watershed Council, to implement burns in different ecosystems and fuel types across the region. They will also participate in field tours and presentations by local managers and researchers, giving them the opportunity to learn about conservation issues and strategies in northern California.

This event is sponsored by the Fire Learning Network (FLN) (a joint project



Spanish TREX participants and Redwood National Park staff conducting a prescribed burn in the white oak woodlands of the Bald Hills.  
PHOTO BY EAMON ENGBER, REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK, OCTOBER 2012



of The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, and several Department of Interior land management agencies), and it is one of many similar events that the FLN has inspired and supported across the country in recent years. The TRES is also sponsored by the groups listed above, the California Fire Science Consortium, Humboldt State Wildland Fire Lab, and a number of other partner agencies and organizations.

These events are invaluable to the natural resource communities where they take place, as they not only increase individual participants' knowledge of and experience with prescribed fire, but they also increase the capacity of the region's agencies, organizations, and landowners to effectively manage their lands and put much-needed "good fire" back on the ground. In both local and national surveys of fire managers, the lack of qualified personnel has been identified as a major obstacle to the use of prescribed fire. However, this is not the result of a lack of interest or enthusiasm for prescribed fire; rather, it is a lack of training opportunities and legal protections that keeps many land managers and landowners from



The press interviews a TRES participant in New Mexico, putting her media training to the test.  
PHOTO BY MARY HUFFMAN, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, SEPTEMBER 2012

gaining the necessary qualifications and experience to use fire as a tool.

In California, the primary users of prescribed fire are federal agencies, as they are some of the only groups with sufficient organizational capacity to conduct prescribed burns on a large scale. Many non-governmental groups,

timber companies, private landowners, and researchers—and even some local, state, and federal agencies that don't have fire management programs—are unable to build or maintain qualified crews, and they are therefore unable to use prescribed fire as part of their land management or restoration strategies. Likewise, agencies that do have fire management programs are finding it harder and harder to prioritize and staff prescribed burns, given deep cuts to their fuels and restoration budgets. The TRES model addresses these issues in direct and indirect ways. In a direct sense, these training events give burners from all backgrounds the rare opportunity to gain experience and qualifications in prescribed fire implementation, and during the two-week event, participants also constitute a fully staffed crew that increases the capacity of the local prescribed fire workforce by leaps and bounds. Indirectly, TRESs also forms a foundation for future collaboration, often spawning new cross-boundary prescribed fire projects and trainings.



TRES participants review maps and plans on a burn in New Mexico.  
PHOTO BY MARY HUFFMAN, THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, SEPTEMBER 2010





Group photo: Spanish TRES participants and Redwood National Park staff, just after successfully completing a prescribed burn in the Bald Hills.

PHOTO BY EAMON ENGBER, REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK, OCTOBER 2012

## Spanish TRES Last Fall

Last fall, the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council helped host 20 firefighters from Spain who were touring northern California during a one-week international TRES (organized by the California Klamath-Siskiyou Fire Learning Network, one of the local hubs of the national FLN). The Spanish participants were mostly seasoned firefighters with years of experience, and they were eager to learn about fire ecology and effects here in northern California, where climate and vegetation patterns are not unlike the Mediterranean area where they live and work. During their visit to the North Coast, they toured the Canoe Fire in Humboldt Redwoods State Park, spent an evening comparing notes with local fire managers and students, and spent a full day in Redwood National Park, where they helped implement a prescribed burn in the white oak woodlands of the Bald Hills. That burn was a testament to the efficacy of the TRES model: due to a statewide burn ban, the park was not able to bring in

outside fire crews to assist with the burn (as they would under normal circumstances), and without the assistance of the Spanish fire crew, they most likely would have had to cancel the burn due to understaffing. The Spanish crew was equally grateful for the opportunity to participate in the burn—it turned out to be both a training experience and a cultural experience!

## Other TRESs This Year

A couple of other TRESs are taking place this year across the country. In April, the FLN hosted a TRES in the Loess Hills of Iowa, and this fall, they will be hosting an international Spanish-language TRES in New Mexico. A similar event last year brought participants from Argentina, Costa Rica, Spain, and Mexico. These events focus on the art and science of prescribed fire—including presentations by local researchers and managers, and hands-on experience in burning—but they also emphasize the social side of prescribed fire, including media training and discussions of local culture and

attitudes. Participants are also asked to give a presentation on their local fire ecology and management issues, which fosters a sense of shared learning and respect within the group. The Northern California TRES will employ the same model, offering a truly unique and valuable opportunity for this region's prescribed fire community!

## For More information

The application deadline for the Northern California TRES is July 26, just before this edition of *Forest and River News* comes off the press. However, if you are interested in learning more about this or future events, please feel free to contact Lenya Quinn-Davidson, Director of the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council, for more information ([nwcapfc@gmail.com](mailto:nwcapfc@gmail.com)). There may be opportunities to observe prescribed burns or interact with TRES participants during the two-week event, so please ask Lenya to add your name to her contact list if you are interested. You can also visit the Council's website for more information at [www.norcalrxfirecouncil.org](http://www.norcalrxfirecouncil.org).



## Northern California Prescribed Fire Council

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