

Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency: Big Creek Prescribed Burn

Trinity Integrated Fire Mgmt Partnership November 2012



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

In early November, crews in the Trinity Basin burned 19 acres on Big Creek Ranch in Hayfork's municipal watershed as part of their work under a Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER) project. This was the first of several units in a burn plan for the lower watershed that covers over 1,000 acres and spans ownerships including private ranchlands, the water district and Bureau of Land Management holdings. The burn was conducted by Watershed Center (WRTC) crews, Firestorm employees, and the Weaverville Volunteer Fire Department. The objectives for this burn included habitat and rangeland improvement, hazardous fuel reduction, oak woodland restoration and community wildfire protection.

The WRTC and Trinity Basin FLN have worked for years in Big Creek, setting the stage for these treatments. The work has included a

comprehensive assessment of the watershed; implementation of pre-treatments, including handwork and mastication; and the development of local capacity to lead and staff prescribed burns. The SPER funding was granted to the Trinity Integrated Fire Management Partnership (TIFMP), which brings together stakeholders from around Trinity County to cooperate in planning and conducting prescribed burns that will improve ecological conditions, protect local communities and empower citizens by teaching them how to use fire responsibly. The Trinity Forest evolved with a frequent fire regime and the partners hope that with programs like the TIFMP they will be able to bring fire back to this fire-adapted landscape.

For more information, contact:

Nick Goulette
nickg@hayfork.net
(530) 526-4729

Big Creek is the municipal watershed for the community of Hayfork. It is also a major wild anadromous stream and Late Seral Reserve under the Northwest Forest Plan and Shasta-Trinity Land and Resource Management Plan. Because of its value as the community's water supply and critical habitat for a host of non-human communities, rebalancing the watershed's relationship to fire is imperative. Prescribed fire will help achieve community and ecological outcomes at scale, and the investment in local capacity to carry out prescribed burning will help ensure that the landscape is cared for into the future. The controlled fire prescribed for this area links to a larger suite of investments flowing from two primary strategic planning documents, the Trinity County CWPP and the Big Creek Integrated Watershed Management Plan. The CWPP prioritizes hazardous fuels and restoration treatments on public and private lands near Big Creek and in and near the community of Hayfork. Under them, the Forest Service, Trinity County Fire Safe Council, The Watershed Center, BLM, NRCS and private landowners have made considerable investments in strategic fuel management and defensible space in the Big Creek Ranch project area over the past 15 years.



The Big Creek Burn was prescribed to promote the resilience of oak woodlands, as well as improve rangeland and control noxious weeds. The lower photo shows operations along a roadside in rural residential Hayfork.

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Participating Organizations

Firestorm Wildland Fire
Suppression, Inc.

The Watershed Center
Weaverville Volunteer Fire
Department

The Fire Learning Network and SPER are 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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