



## Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field



April 5, 2013: not quite ready to burn. © Marek Smith/TNC

### Highlights from the Appalachian FLN: Recent Projects and Planned Actions

April 2013

As winter is (mostly) turning to spring, Marek Smith and Sam Lindblom have shared a look at FLN working group projects over the last several months, and an outline of some plans for the near future.

#### Monitoring Working Group

Nineteen colleagues participated in the Ecological Monitoring Refresher Workshop on January 22. The workshop's primary purpose was to train key users on a new data entry template and user guide that enables forest structure and composition data to be entered into a FFI (FEAT/FIREMON Integrated)<sup>1</sup> database. This effort will make entering all partner data into one database easier, and will facilitate future data analysis of a much larger dataset. Participants also reviewed protocol methods for inconsistencies and discussed the relationships between burn unit objectives and the metrics being measured by the protocol.

Since the workshop, a revised species list has been completed, and Lindsey Curtin is working on distributing it, along with instructions on how to import a new list. An FFI protocol was added for the basal area prism; this will be included with the species list update. Revisions of field data sheets to match FFI protocols will begin this spring and two Panasonic Toughbooks are being ordered for piloting electronic field data collection. Plans are also in the works for woody species ID refresher training in June.

Working group leads John Moncure and Nikole Swaney also presented a poster<sup>2</sup> at the 4th Annual International Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference in February which highlighted their fire severity assessment of the Easter Complex wildfires that burned 40,000 acres in the Allegheny Highlands last spring. Burn severity was assessed in the summer of 2012 using satellite imagery and on-the-ground plots, and the effects will continue to be tracked through the 2014 growing season with the aid of imagery from a second satellite.

For more information on the Monitoring Working Group

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#### Education and Outreach Working Group

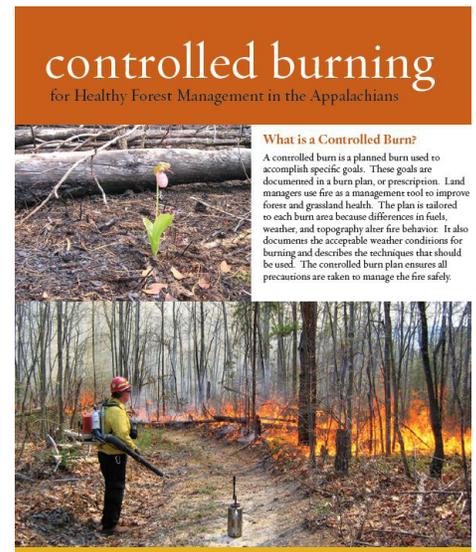
Al Cire and Marek Smith have completed draft designs for two 24x36" interpretive panels to be installed in low-profile style sign bases at the Blue Suck burn unit in Douthat State Park. The draft signs will be polished after the burn is conducted (it has been rescheduled for later this year). The FLN has three additional sign bases, as well as funds to design interpretive panels for them. Partners with a good demonstration site that would benefit from interpretive

signage should contact Marek.

The FLN will also be reprinting its "Controlled Burning for Healthy Forests in the Appalachians" brochure.

For more information on the Monitoring Working Group

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#### Grassland Working Group

Nine colleagues participated in the first conference call of this new working group on February 19. The main primary purpose of the call was to understand what type of herbaceous-dominated communities or habitats each partner agency is managing or restoring, and what techniques are being used. The group also discussed native seed sources, mixes, and planting techniques. The next steps identified are to share the na-

tive seed mix lists that were discussed on the call, develop a digital library of resources, develop a database of good native forb collection sites in the region, and schedule a field trip to view several demonstration sites.

For more on the Grassland Working Group

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## Agreements

A cooperating agreement (MOU) for controlled burn activities has been in place between the Nature Conservancy and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) since 2004, but a new MOU between the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest and DCR was executed over the winter. Several other MOUs are nearing execution, including ones between the U.S. Forest Service and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), between the Conservancy and DGIF, and between the Conservancy and U.S. Forest Service Region 8. FLN partners extend special thanks to Jay Jeffreys, Pat Sheridan, Sam Lindblom, Bobby Clontz, Claiborne Woodall and Robin Stidham for spearheading this work and for their persistence and patience in getting these agreements developed.

## Upcoming Meetings & Workshops

Partners in the Appalachians FLN are also invited to attend the workshops of the network's sister regional network, the Southern Blue Ridge FLN. The SBR's annual workshop will be held May 21-23 in Helen, Georgia.

For more information on the SBR FLN workshop

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An announcement will soon go out for an informal field trip and BBQ lunch in June, and plans are in progress for a more formal gathering at either the Wildland Fire in the Appalachians<sup>3</sup> conference in October or another date and location later in the fall. Contact Sam Lindblom (slindblom@tnc.org, (434) 987-0712) for more information, or with suggestions for field trips or meeting agendas, dates or locations.

1 FFI software: <http://www.frames.gov/partner-sites/ffi/ffi-home/>

2 The poster is at <https://www.conservationgateway.org/Files/Pages/Poster-Allegheny-Highlands-Fire-Severity-Assessment-Feb-2013.aspx>

3 Wildland Fire in the Appalachians conference: <http://appfire.conference.org/>

## Spring 2013 Burns

Partners have nearly 17,900 acres of prescribed burning planned for the next month or two—clearly the most ever for these landscapes. Following discussions last November in which partners expressed interest in improved communication and coordination on burns, all are encouraged to contact the listed leads to offer—or request—help.

### George Washington National Forest—Central Zone

Kurt Thompson (khthompson@fs.fed.us)

- Big Wilson compartment 3–1,400 acres in cooperation with TNC
- Neil Run—2,286 acres
- Hidden Valley grasslands—65 acres (burned April 4)
- Big Cobbler—456 acres
- Coles Mountain—1,200 acres

### George Washington National Forest—North Zone

Tom Ledbetter (tjledbetter@fs.fed.us)

- Catback—3,000 acres
- Hone Quarry 2—5,600 acres
- Evick Knob—350 acres
- Buck Mountain Blocks 4 & 5—230 acres

### The Nature Conservancy

Sam Lindblom (slindblom@tnc.org)

- Big Wilson compartment 3–1,400 acres in cooperation with GWNF
- Mare Run—876 acres
- Narrows—1 acre
- Den Creek—15 acres
- Due to the late winter, the Blue Suck burn at Douthat State Park has been postponed until fall/winter

### Monongahela National Forest—White Sulfur RD

Pete Fischer (pfischer@fs.fed.us)

Kevin Taylor (kltaylor@fs.fed.us)

- Peach Orchard blocks B & C—815 acres
- Hopkins Know—958 acres

### Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Al Bourgeois (al.bourgeois@dgif.virginia.gov)

- Jackson Ridge (Little North Mtn WMA)—50 acres
- Augusta Springs Dump Road (Little North Mtn WMA)—168 acres
- Walnut Ridge (Highland WMA)—235 acres
- T.M. Gathright WMA grasslands—5 acres

### Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Wes Paulos (wes.paulos@dcr.virginia.gov)

- Cowbane Prairie—40 acres
- Ogden Cave grasslands—35 acres
- Difficult Creek—70 acres
- Grassy Hill—40 acres

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](mailto:ldecker@tnc.org) or (801) 320-0524.



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