

Fire Outreach & Media

Outreach, through the media and by communicating directly to individuals about fire and restoration, is a key part of the work done under PERC. Many actions needed to make forests and grasslands more resilient and protect human communities—thinning trees, lighting fires, putting smoke in the air—raise community concerns that can hamper the ability to get needed work done. In addition, the work needed to help communities become better adapted to living with fire requires a robust flow of communication in all directions; a variety of written resources and media coverage are thus valuable assets for the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network.

Research has shown that among the most effective, trusted communicators about fire are “people with hats”—firefighters and other practitioners. The Fire Learning Network (FLN), prescribed fire training exchanges (TRES) and Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER) projects are therefore ideal means of getting the word out about “good fire.” With the addition of the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC LN) to the suite of PERC programs, yet another avenue for improving communication among the various stakeholders in places affected by fire is available.

Partners work by accelerating the development of prototype fire adapted **communities** in a **landscape context** ... accelerating integrated efforts for restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes through multi-scalar collaboration, effective planning processes and **transformative** learning and networks ... building operational & **social capacity** for response to wildland fire in a changing world ... accelerating the adjustment of landscape-level strategies for a **changing climate** ... integrating science, cultural knowledge and adaptive learning to **resolve barriers** to transformative resilience.

NETWORK PRODUCT: “AFTER THE FIRE” TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITIES

This spring a useful new toolkit was developed by the Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition, a Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network hub in central Washington, with support from the Fire Learning Network. “After the Fire” is a collection of easily customizable resources that communities and local groups can use to help individuals and businesses know how to recognize, to respond and minimize risks just after a wildfire. The collection of brochures, door hangers, PSA scripts and other materials had barely been launched—not all resources were in their final form, in fact—when it got its first test, in the town of Entiat, Washington, during the Mills Canyon Fire.

After the Fire toolkit: <http://afterthefirewa.org/>

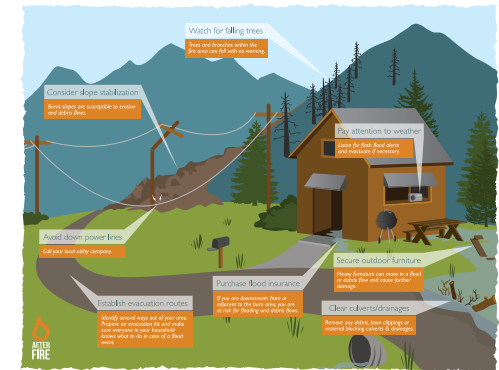
Blog post about its first use: <http://facnetwork.org/afterthefire-toolkit/>

Public Service Announcement (PSA) Script: Resilience

As the smoke clears and you return to the area burned by wildfire, you may notice some startling changes. Forest floors once green and thick with undergrowth may appear barren and black. However, fire is a natural process and regeneration and re-growth is likely already in progress.

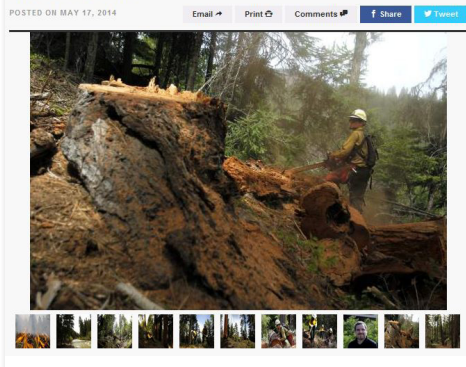
Underground stems and dormant buds are capable of surviving fire—watch for plants like fireweed. Fire can even help to germinate some seeds. Birds will return quickly, with larger animals to follow. Though it can take time, the forest is resilient and will continue to grow and change.

While it can be tempting to investigate the changes in the burned area, forest users should be aware of the hazards. Damaged limbs and dead trees can fall with no warning. Fire can expose garbage and debris previously hidden by brush. Stumps may have burned away, leaving deep holes that can be dangerous. Be aware of the changed and changing environment. Watch out for post-fire hazards, but also watch for the strength and resilience of your forests.



In addition to direct communications through field tours and interpretive brochures, signs and video, in the first half of 2014, PERC programs and people appeared in more than 40 radio, TV, newspaper, and online media pieces, from the *Ainsworth (NE) Star-Journal* to the *Washington Post* (see Appendix F for a complete list). By investing the time in finding and talking with reporters, leaders of FLN, FAC Learning Network, SPER and TREX projects have helped make the public conversation about wildfire and its management more nuanced and positive in tone.

Forest Service hopes summer burns will keep smoke down



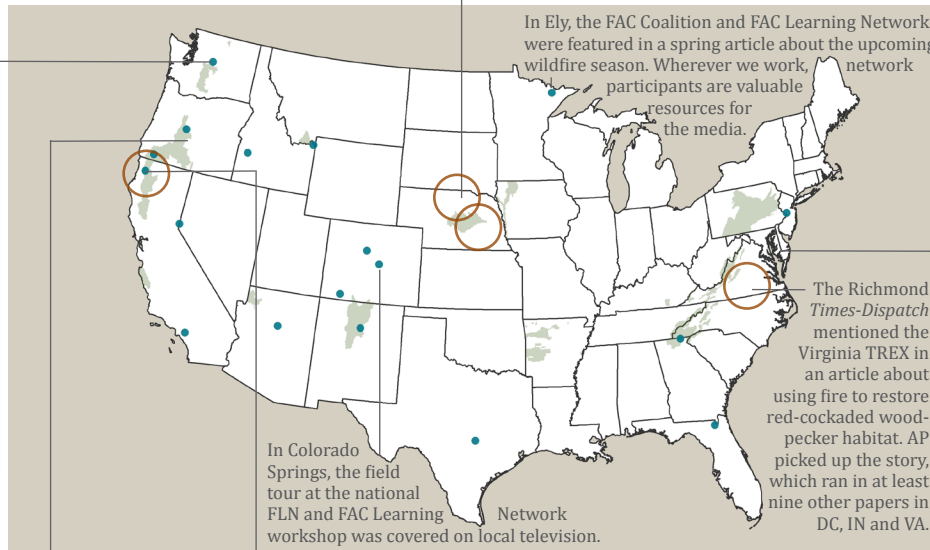
↑ Regular contact with a *Yakima Herald* reporter is helping further FAC efforts in the Washington Dry Forests FLN and the local FAC Learning Network pilot community of Leavenworth. The paper ran a number of stories in recent months, covering both FAC and fire management activities.



This spring, the Nebraska TREX were supported by a media committee that worked before, during and after the events to reach out to reporters, brief and train participants in messaging and interview skills, accompany reporters during burns, and follow up afterwards to answer questions and review stories when asked. The effort was significant, but paid off well, with reporters being highly interested in the opportunity to safely see fire up close, learn about it from its practitioners, and share it with their audiences. At least 10 newspaper, radio and TV stories were published, from the very local *Valentine Midland News* to papers and radio stations with statewide or regional audiences on the order of 80,000 people.

“Rancher and farmer Errol Wells was pleased with the [TREX] effort. ‘It went great,’ he said. ‘The fire opened up a lot of real estate for more desirable plants to come in and for more forage for cattle. Now there’s more sunlight. With the cedars out, we might see some oak trees again. We think lots of things will get better.”

from “Igniting Fires, Sparking Change: Fire Trainees Leave Nebraska with New Skills, Perspectives”
Prairie Fire (May 2014)



In Ely, the FAC Coalition and FAC Learning Network were featured in a spring article about the upcoming wildfire season. Wherever we work, network participants are valuable resources for the media.

In Colorado Springs, the field tour at the national FLN and FAC Learning Network workshop was covered on local television.

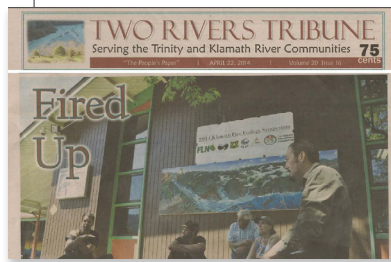
The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* mentioned the Virginia TREX in an article about using fire to restore red-cockaded woodpecker habitat. AP picked up the story, which ran in at least nine other papers in DC, IN and VA.



photo: Allan Sprecher, courtesy of the National Building Museum

“Setting fire to fight fire may seem counterintuitive, says Blane Heumann.... But it’s not quite as contradictory as it sounds. ‘If your problem is too much hot fire,’ he says, ‘then your solution should be some good fire.’”

from “Climate Control”
Nature Conservancy Magazine (April 2014)



Regular communication, from articles in local papers to Facebook pages during wildfire events, keeps fire information flowing and productive conversation alive in the Western Klamath Mountains and California Klamath-Siskiyou FLNs.

A FEW GOOD LINKS: VIDEOS & MORE

Western Klamath Mountains partners produced two videos based on FLN, FAC Learning Network and TREX work in their landscape:

“Fall Burning in Orleans 2013”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6mFZYDqtJE&feature=youtu.be>

“A Fire Wise Story: Klamath River 2014”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIP2roGaNck>

Eytan Krasolovsky (Forest Guild) gave a presentation about lessons learned in last fall’s Black Lake, NM TREX in a Southwest Fire Science Consortium webinar:
https://forestguild.mitel-nhwc.com/perl/ilinc/lms/vc_launch.pl?activity_id=pcmszrh&user_id=

The FAC Learning Network hub in Towns County, GA shows up in the IAFC public service announcement that promotes www.fireadapted.org:
<http://vimeo.com/89195824>