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Strategies for Resilient Landscapes, Communities and Fire Management

Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together (PERFACT) is a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. The agreement supports the Fire Networks—the Fire Learning Network (since 2002), Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (2008), Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (2013), Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (2016)—and other efforts that bring people together to identify and meet our wildfire challenges.

Six broad strategies under PERFACT support the three goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. There is not a one-to-one correspondence between our strategies and the Cohesive Strategy goals—because the goals themselves are intertwined, and because each strategy may support progress in multiple ways.

Together the strategies increase the number and range of people and institutions involved in, and responsible for, various aspects of fire management. They help build equitable and effective partnerships that underlie effective and sustainable work together. And they develop resources that inform, support and connect this expanded fire management community.

A Expand the scope of ownership of, and responsibility for, fire management.

Work under this strategy is wide-ranging—from building public support for active fire management and tolerance for smoke and other risks of prescribed fire, to support for truly all-hands, all-lands implementation on the ground. This might be expressed as moving toward co-ownership: “These are our landscapes, our communities, our fires—our problems, our solutions.”

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- ▶ The partnership that has for many years led the Island Park Sustainable Fire Community dramatically expanded its footprint this year, with the founding of the **Greater Yellowstone Fire Action Network**. The network’s first workshop drew participants from fire adapted community groups, fire departments, a local county commission, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy.
- ▶ To foster **new and richer community connections**, the California Klamath-Siskiyou FLN nourished creative discourse between artists and fire practitioners, planting the seeds for the **Fire and Music Project**. The project has since received a grant to implement a year-long artist learning immersion program that will culminate in a public concert series.
- ▶ Even after **more than 15 years**, the Southern Blue Ridge FLN continues to draw in **new partner agencies and organizations** interested in working together to get more fire on the ground in the Appalachians. The partnership is strengthened by an annual workshop in May, along with collaborative developed burn prioritization and implementation.
- ▶ FireScope Mendocino has been **reaching out to the community** as it hosts a process to define **potential operational delineations (PODs)** for the landscape. A workshop last fall drew 60 people, with 40 taking part in a field tour. A map of the Mendocino National Forest and adjacent lands with draft POD boundaries is [posted](#) for community members to explore and comment on. “Our participation in the FLN allowed access to seasoned personnel, such as the Western Klamath FLN lead, in introducing PODs to the group. This was a critical component in laying out a foundational understanding of delineations prior to the collaborative work we asked of workshop attendees.”
- ▶ When the Loup River TREX was cancelled due to uncooperative weather, one of the organizers traveled instead to the Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week. During that week, he was able to sign multiple task books, including a final evaluation for a RXB2 trainee. “There’s a **bottleneck of qualified RXB2 positions**, so adding another to the roster is a huge accomplishment.”

B Support and maintain equitable partnerships.

Sharing ownership and responsibility requires partnerships that are robust, in which all stakeholders have a role and voice, and where power and responsibility are distributed equitably. Intentional investment in these relationships builds a foundation for working, innovating and learning together, and for the transmission of new methods and best practices.

C Increase local and individual capacity.

Shared ownership of fire demands more of people, communities and organizations in fire-prone landscapes. This requires investment in a wide range of leaders and resources—from community organizing and facilitation skills, to mitigation crews and emergency response capacity.

D Build and diversify a workforce for co-management of fire.

The scale of the wildfire challenge requires growing the workforce beyond what federal and state agencies alone can be expected to provide. The complexity of the challenge calls for bringing more diverse viewpoints, skills and life experiences to bear.

E Expand the enabling infrastructure and knowledge networks for a shared management system.

A broadened fire management system will require new ideas, new practices and new ways of communicating them among players. Agency structures and institutional knowledge will remain core to safe and effective response, but as other individuals and organizations assume their roles, innovations will be required. Similarly, as learning in the field becomes increasingly dispersed and local, new ways of capturing and sharing it will be needed.

F Shift the regulatory, policy and funding environments to support integrated fire management.

Hundreds of network members and partners across the country are identifying challenges and finding and refining ways to meet them. They are a valuable resource to inform the policy environment—at all levels—so that we can, collectively, more effectively meet our goal of living better and more safely with fire.

▶ A prescribed burn association knowledge exchange hosted in Northern California, where the FLN introduced [PBAs](#) in 2016, helped partners who are interested in starting PBAs in Colorado, Oregon, New Mexico, Washington and Spain. Participants attended a Cal-TREX training weekend, had a day-long Q&A discussion, and then joined a “Good Fire and Tribal Engagement” workshop; the gathering closed with a review of lessons learned and future steps.

▶ It’s not all boots and drip torches: FLN and FAC Net staff offered a virtual Facilitative Leadership training for 24 Fire Networks members over the winter, giving participants tools to improve their **collaborative leadership skills**.

▶ In Minnesota, TNC facilitated a two-day gathering for 40 prescribed fire practitioners from Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, TNC, state agencies and other organizations. The highlight was a provocative and valuable discussion in the field led by tribal historic preservation officers from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe about **culturally significant sites and considerations for prescribed burning** on such sites. “We came away better equipped to identify land and water features indicative of burial mounds, village sites, and ceremonial sites and more aware of proper steps to take should one find artifacts or remains.”

▶ **WTREX saw unprecedented expansion** this year, with local partners hosting four events in three countries: the [Karuk Women’s TREX](#) in California in the fall, and [WTREX-North Carolina](#), WTREX-South Africa and WTREX-Canada in the spring.

▶ FAC Net hosts monthly calls for members to **share practices and build relationships** within the Pacific Northwest, Southwest, Central, Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and the Eastern U.S. regions. The calls have also led to follow-up support, like the ongoing **peer assists** between Ashland Fire & Rescue and the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization.

▶ Staff and partners in California provided input to help guide the state’s **Prescribed Fire Liability Claims Fund Pilot**, and helped design the standards and training for the CARX qualified burn bosses and cultural burning practitioners whose work is eligible for coverage.

▶ Four staff or Fire Networks members serve on the **Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission**, representing NGOs, tribal governments, firefighters and municipal governments.

In a pilot project to provide surge capacity, TNC recruited and hired 64 employees, and deployed them—along with 43 volunteers and employees of partner organizations—on more than 50 priority prescribed fire projects across the country. © TNC



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