Central Appalachians
Fire Learning Network

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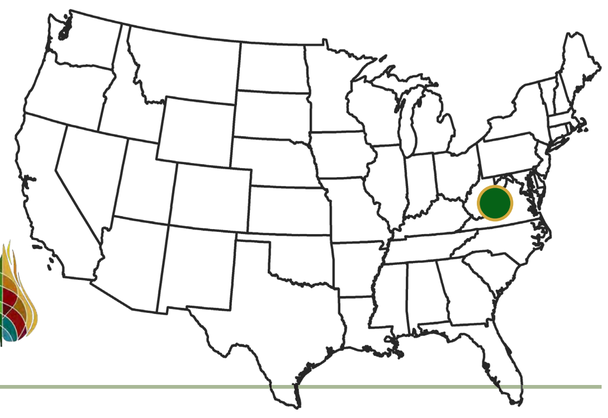

The Central Appalachians FLN engages federal, state and private land managers, academic institutions and non-profit organizations in a collaborative effort to enhance capacity to implement ecological fire management in the Central Appalachian Forest, Western Allegheny Plateau, and Cumberlands and Southern Ridge and Valley ecoregions. These landscapes include rolling and mountainous terrain, Appalachian pine-oak forests and woodlands, pine-oak-heath shrublands and barrens, small-patch grasslands including high elevation balds, wet prairies and cedar glades and high levels of species endemism.

Over this FLN's eight year history, increases in partnership diversity, communication and coordination has been key to restoring the role of fire at an ecologically meaningful scale. In 2014, Central Appalachians FLN partners conducted controlled burns on over 36,000 acres in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky and Pennsylvania.

Key network accomplishments include:

- Development of robust fire effects monitoring programs, including avian community, forest structure & composition and burn severity
- Mapping of ecological zones across 10.2 million acres in Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia
- Development of spatial analysis tools for prioritizing fire restoration and assessing fire effects
- Implementation of MOUs and cooperative agreements to facilitate cross-agency, all-lands approach to restoration
- Development of interpretive signs, brochures and other education materials on prescribed fire
- Facilitation of interagency training opportunities
- Poster and oral presentations at national conferences to disseminate network products and success stories
- Facilitation of dendrochronology, soil charcoal and other fire history research throughout the region
- Use of Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER I and II) funding to fully integrate non-native invasive species control with prescribed fire management activities

Network Landscapes

Heart of the Appalachians
Cumberland River
Keystone Appalachians

Network Partners

Arcadia University
Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists
Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources
Kentucky Division of Forestry
National Park Service—Shenandoah NP, New River Gorge National Recreation Area
National Weather Service
National Wild Turkey Federation
Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at Fort Indiantown Gap
Pennsylvania Game Commission
Radford University
The Nature Conservancy—Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia
University of Kentucky—Forestry
University of Maryland
University of Tennessee
U.S. Geological Survey—Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
USDA Forest Service—Daniel Boone NF, George Washington and Jefferson NFs, Monongahela NF; Northern Research Station
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation—Natural Heritage, State Parks
Virginia Department of Forestry
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Virginia Tech
Virginia Forestry and Wildlife Group
West Virginia Division of Forestry
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
West Virginia University

Highlight: Coordinated Fire Effects Monitoring

Significant progress has been made in all Central Appalachians FLN landscapes to implement programs that monitor treatment effectiveness. Members of the Monitoring Working Group in the Heart of the Appalachians landscape (in Virginia and West Virginia) have entered data into a Feat/Firemon Integrated (FFI) database for all 401 macroplots monitored by The Nature Conservancy and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. The Monitoring Working Group also teamed up with the USFS FFI lead, Duncan Lutes, to host two webinar trainings that provided users an in-depth look at the Data Analysis and Reports and Query Builder tools in the FFI program. Trainees who took part used real data in the exercises and produced several reports and graphs of vegetation data.

At one of the annual workshops held by the Monitoring Working Group, participants refresh plant identification skills, review monitoring protocols and share updates.
Photo: TNC/Marek Smith

Recently, more than 40 plots for vegetative monitoring have been installed across the landscape on the Daniel Boone National Forest, in the Stearns and London Ranger Districts. And in Pennsylvania, The Nature Conservancy and Pennsylvania Game Commission have contracted with Arcadia University to provide fire effects monitoring for their growing program.

Highlight: Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

Increasing staff capacity and specialized qualifications have long been objectives of this FLN. To help address this, in March 2014 we hosted the first eastern U.S. prescribed fire training exchange (TREX). Participants from a wide range of organizations and states gained valuable experience while helping Virginia partners complete moderate complexity controlled burns in southeastern pine savannas and Appalachian pine-oak forests.

Briefing at the 2014 TREX.
Photo: TNC/Robert B. Clontz

Above, at left: USFS staff, part of a multi-agency crew, patrol the Blue Suck Burn at Douthat State Park in Virginia. *Photo: TNC/Sam Lindblom*
From top: A controlled burn of the Scotia oak barrens of State Game Lands 176 in Pennsylvania (*TNC/Jennifer Case*); Interns from the Conservancy's Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) program installed interpretive signs developed by FLN partners (*TNC/Jen Dalke*); TNC staff presented a poster on the FLN's avian monitoring program at a Partners in Flight conference in October 2014 (*TNC/Nikole Swaney*); A researcher from the University of Tennessee collects a fire scarred stump (*Georgina DeWeese/UT-Knoxville*)

Links to products of the Central Appalachians FLN, including reports, posters, brochure, interpretive signs and other materials can be found on the network's page at: www.conservationgateway.org

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