



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Ashland Forest Resiliency Spring 2017 Controlled Burns

Ashland, OR



2017 Ashland TREC crew

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Partners in the Ashland Forest Resiliency (AFR) project—the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, The Nature Conservancy, Lomakatsi Restoration Project and City of Ashland—continued mechanical treatments and accelerated use of fire this spring, drawing on support from federal, state and municipal agencies and the FLN.

Burn Windows— Letting in Some Air

Burn windows in southern Oregon were opened a bit this year compared to recent years, when concern about smoke management, smoke intrusions and regulatory compliance limited available burn days to as few as three a year. Federal manager and state regulator interpretations of acceptable smoke management appear to be influenced by dialogues that took place during successful burning in 2016 (including the Ashland TREC), ongoing local and state-wide discussions about smoke management, and increasing public support for using fire for forest health. Between the efforts of Forest Service and City staff and the contributions of the 2017 Ashland TREC, nearly 250 acres of controlled underburns were conducted on six units, on seven days during the TREC, and later additional acres on the focal AFR project.

Ashland TREC— Burning and Training Together

This Prescribed Fire Training Exchange took place May 1-12, hosted at Southern Oregon University, and sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and the City of Ashland. It brought together 50 fire practitioners and leaders, and even a freelance writer for High Country News (whose article will appear in December). Joining forces with the AFR communications team, the Ashland TREC generated outreach and engagement via Facebook postings, a new 30 second video posted on the AFR webpage and partner Facebook pages, and a 45-second spot that ran on regional public radio. City of Ashland Forestry Division Chief Chris Chambers drew from a new AFR partnership fact sheet on controlled burning to inform his “Alarm Box” editorial on the TREC in the local paper. The Ashland TREC also

hosted a public evening program about living with fire, with a presentation by Dr. Susan Prichard from the University of Washington; this generated an excellent story that ran in the *Ashland Daily Tidings* and *Medford Mail Tribune*.

TREC teams worked on two Ashland Forest Resiliency burns and several on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and Medford District Bureau of Land Management. They also worked on several units on private property, where the complexities of structure protection heightened learning opportunities.

Learning While Burning— Is it Getting Too Hot?

AFR partners have been pleased to see an increase in acres of underburning accomplished in 2017, achieving many fuel reduction and ecological goals. However, about a quarter of the 220 acres



Structure protection added complexity to the private-land burning during the Ashland TREC.

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Briefing before the Shipley burn, during the 2017 Ashland TREX

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Participant Organizations

Ashland Fire & Rescue
 Bomberos Guanajuato (Mexico)
 Bureau of Land Management
 City of Eugene—Parks and Open Space
 Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs—Fire Management
 Coquille Indian Tribe
 Fontenelle Forest
 Forest Service (Ireland)
 Key Peninsula Fire Department
 Lomakatsi Restoration Project
 Long Tom Watershed Council
 Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (Canada)
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
 Oregon Department of Forestry
 Oregon State University
 Oregon Woods Inc
 The Nature Conservancy
 USDA Forest Service

burned at an intensity that was higher than planned or desired. Consistent with the transparent approach that AFR partners take, they invited a local journalist to write about the controlled burns and hosted a public tour over the summer. Partners have also visited the burns to observe and discuss the effects on several occasions, including an after action review in late July convened by the district fire ecologist.

To encourage learning from these burns, a multi-party monitoring plan was developed to supplement standard burn monitoring by the partners. The Forest Service area ecologist, an entomologist from the Forest Service Forest Health Program and Conservancy ecologists teamed up to evaluate impacts on large, old legacy trees and lay the groundwork for understanding fire effects over time. They found that less than a third of the 69 legacy trees sampled had leaves killed throughout half or more of their canopy; this is the level of



An ecologist from the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, an entomologist from the Forest Service Forest Health Program, and an ecologist from The Nature Conservancy investigate insect activity in a charred tree after controlled burning in the Ashland watershed. © TNC (Kerry Metlen)

scorch considered problematic or even fatal, especially for an unhealthy tree. However, most local trees are quite resilient to fire, so careful sampling and follow-up monitoring is required to know the long-term effects of these burns.

Monitoring results will be shared this winter, in preparation for another season of burning. This process will help the teams better recognize the conditions that contributed to the more intense heat output, determine acceptable fire intensity thresholds, and improve how future burns are conducted.

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The Fire Learning Network is part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information about PERFECT, contact Lynn Decker: ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.



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v. 22 Nov 17 / Darren Borgias, Kerry Metlen

More Information, Photos & Media

Outreach via Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/AshlandTREX2016/photos/>

“Alarm Box” column: <http://www.dailytidings.com/news/20170419/trex-to-use-controlled-burns-as-learning-experience>

Article about presentation: <http://www.dailytidings.com/news/20170505/fighting-fire-with-fire>

Ashland Forest Resiliency: www.ashland.or.us/AFR