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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 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 collectively 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.”

WHAT NETWORK MEMBERS SAY:

- “ The partnerships, having roots from the initial planning days of the Fire Learning Network process, have evolved into an **all-hands-on-deck approach** during fire season, leading to controlled burning on approximately 14,900 acres this year.
- “ During the 2018 TREX [Prescribed Fire Training Exchange], the **community seemed better prepared for the smoke...** As expected, some folks are still resistant, but over 80 percent of the commenters were happy to see #goodfire on social media.
- “ We have **created new partnerships** with people working in the fields of landscape architecture, landscape design and horticulture, as well as real estate and real estate development. Over time, these relationships **will alleviate the need to mitigate vegetation around homes**, as these professionals will be designing and planting materials with fire adapted communities ideals in mind.
- “ Our TREX is engaging members of local fire districts ... local and regional staff of state forestry agencies that want to see greater use of the tool, and state fish & wildlife prescribed fire crews to support the continued development of their program. Until recently, it was primarily federal, tribal and a few NGOs that used and promoted prescribed fire to any large degree in the state. TREX, in our experience, is an **accelerator and diversifier of prescribed fire constituencies!**
- “ I feel the biggest accomplishment is the stronger lines of communication and trust that we are establishing across agencies and in our communities, and the recognition that we are all in this together. **We come to the table as equals** and are willing to work together on creating strategies to help our forest be healthy and help our communities be more resilient to wildfire.
- “ At the facilitative leadership workshop we were introduced to an organization that works to engage Latinx communities around finding solutions for climate change. Over the last six months, we have been working with them to ... host listening sessions, participatory learning processes and implement their Climate Innovation Lab curriculum. This relationship is helping **build more inclusive and equitable fire outcomes** in the state.

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.

“ We’ve had a significant shift in realizing that **facilitation is a key skill** to coordinating the network and keeping members connected. Experiences provided by the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network—including the facilitative leadership and “Engaging Across Differences” workshops—provided opportunities to improve our individual and team facilitation skills, and changed the way we develop and plan agendas for calls, meetings, workshops and other interactions with partners. We have learned ways to help participants take an active role in meeting objectives, further **bringing equity into conversations**, and **developing collaborative opportunities** for participation.

“ **Prescribed fire insurance is crucial** to increasing the scale of burning, particularly on non-federal lands. We worked with an insurance company to create a product to insure our prescribed fire work, which required translating between the conservation and insurance worlds. Access to insurance paved the way to a full fire program and institutional investments. Once we **identified a viable product**, we worked to **share it with partners across the networks**. We look forward to seeing the impact expand as more organizations take advantage of the opportunity to build prescribed fire programs on solid insurance.

“ **Sharing the FAC Ambassador Toolkit** we developed, and taking the time to speak with people who are interested in this approach, is important because it is another tool that can be used to **increase wildfire risk reduction activities** and build fire adapted communities. This approach can be easily replicated anywhere and can be adapted to fit the needs of each geography.... Our availability to work with and mentor those organizations and individuals will hopefully help them successfully launch similar programs.

“ We used ecocycle planning (**an innovation I learned about through FAC Net**) at our annual workshop to analyze our work programs and identify needed improvements. This resulted in the development of strategic priorities and partner alignment on actions to accelerate community preparation and forest management work. We are now using the plan to guide our investments, raise funds, and adapt our organizations to a new way of planning and implementing projects.

“ With our Burned Area Learning Network experience, we are **working with the Western Cohesive Strategy Team** in a newly established post-fire working group.

Seventeen Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges and cooperative burn events provided 661 training opportunities for a wide range of fire practitioners this year. At least two people completed their burn boss (RXB2) task books at these TRES.



For more about PERFECT, contact Marek Smith (marek_smith@tnc.org).

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