



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

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Niobrara Valley Prescribed Fire Training Exchange North-Central Nebraska ~ March 19-27, 2016

Forty-six participants from federal, state, county and local government agencies; non-governmental organizations and local volunteer fire departments, along with private landowners and college students, spent a week in late March collaborating and learning prescribed fire techniques and leaderships skills at The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve. This was the seventh Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) held at the Preserve. Though hindered by poor weather conditions, the TRES went on, and succeeding in building knowledge and camaraderie among participants through field demonstrations and presentations.

Early in the week, relative humidity consistently dropped below prescription and prevented crews from igniting fires, so they focused on mobilizing, crew cohesion and learning proper spot fire techniques and the basics of black-lining. As weather conditions improved, crews were able to burn about 115 acres at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Fort Niobrara and Valentine National Wildlife Refuge Complex before shifting winds and low humidity closed the burn window.



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The weather can be unpredictable in Nebraska: mid-way through the week, the dry spell gave way to snow, with 5-7 inches falling on the Preserve. Participants moved indoors and heard presentations on the ecology and fuel loads of the region, discussed research conducted on regeneration at the preserve after the Region 24 Complex wildfire and differences in fire behavior in the ponderosa pine forests of the Southwest, and learned about interacting with the media during burns. Crews were then broken into groups and attended practical training sessions on media interviews, radio programming, mobile applications with PDF maps and stuck vehicle extraction. Participants gained valuable knowledge and were able to ask questions of colleagues with a diversity of skills and experiences. As one local volunteer firefighter said, "It's been continuous learning. And being able to talk with people who have a wide range of knowledge on fire from all different aspects has been awesome."

I think one of the most important things I'll be taking back to my department is camaraderie. The other is that as a mainly suppression driven unit, we need to start using fire to our advantage especially in an emergency situation.

VFD participant

For more information, contact:

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video: <https://youtu.be/cgeld1PywuA>

Participant Organizations

Ainsworth Volunteer Fire Department
Bureau Land Management
Divide Fire Protection District
Gering Volunteer Fire Department
Long Pine Volunteer Fire Department
Los Angeles Fire Department
Nebraska Forest Service
Northern Prairies Land Trust
Oregon Woods INC.
The Nature Conservancy
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
USDA Forest Service—Cleveland NF, Santa Fe NF
Utah Department of Natural Resources



A participant from a local volunteer fire department ignites the head fire in grasslands located at the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge.

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Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) are 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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