

Local Leadership on Display at Cascadia TRES

October 8, 2020 Roslyn, Washington

*By Nikolaj Lasbo, The Nature Conservancy
Marketing Manager, Washington state and
North America Fire Program*

After a record-breaking bad year for fires in the West, we need to be looking for every opportunity to do proactive work and accelerate our pace to limit the impacts of future fires in Washington state.

On October 8, the City of Roslyn Fire Department and other fire departments in Kittitas County came together to implement controlled burns that will help make nearby communities safer and provide training opportunities for local firefighters. The burns were conducted as part of a collaborative training program, the Cascadia Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES), in partnership with the Washington Prescribed Fire Council, The Nature Conservancy and Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Resource Conservation and Development Council, among others.



The City of Roslyn Fire Department and other fire departments in Kittitas County came together to implement controlled burns
© Scott Butner Photography

TRES does what no one else is doing in fire management: It provides a cooperative burning model that meets the needs of diverse entities, including federal and state agencies, private landowners and the community—incorporating local values and issues to build the right kinds of capacity in the right places.

Since 2017, multiple burns have been conducted around Roslyn with the assistance of local agencies as part of TRES. To date, Cascadia TRES has provided prescribed fire training to over 100 firefighters and managers. In years past, TRES has brought in fire practitioners from across the United States and Canada to learn about prescribed fire and how to put fire to work in forests and grasslands for the benefit of people and nature.

This fall's burn was unique, however, in that it relied mainly on local fire departments in Kittitas County. Largely staffed by volunteers, rural fire departments provided personnel, resources and equipment to safely conduct the burn, all while getting necessary training and experience. This year, the TRES participants burned a 20-acre unit in the Roslyn Urban Forest and neighboring private land.

While the acreage may seem small in the scale of what needs to be done across Washington state (an estimated 2.7 million acres of forest need thinning and or prescribed fire treatment across Eastern Washington), controlled burns like last week's TRES event are crucial to normalizing the use of prescribed fire in our communities, cultivating future cross-boundary projects across public and private land ownerships, and facilitating training to do this work safely. Cross-boundary burns like these are important to increase the pace and scale of this type of work, particularly around communities with complicated property boundaries and ownerships.



Since 2017, multiple burns have been conducted around Roslyn with the assistance of local agencies as part of TRES.

© Scott Butner Photography

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Cle Elum Fire Department
Kittitas County Fire District #7
Kittitas County Fire District #1
Kittitas County Fire Protection District #6
Kittitas County Fire Protection District #6
Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue #2
Lincoln County Fire District #1
Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
Roslyn Fire Department
Smoked Goose Consulting LLC
The Nature Conservancy
Washington RC&D
Washington State Department of Natural Resources



A core philosophy of TRES is that each participant—from the most experienced burn boss to the entry-level firefighter—has something to learn and something to teach. © Scott Butner Photography

The opportunities for local training and leadership development cannot be understated. A core philosophy of TRES is that each participant—from the experienced burn boss to the entry-level firefighter—has something to learn and something to teach. By burning together and learning together, they're not only working on the qualifications necessary to conduct controlled burns in the future, they're also building valuable connections and networks that help fire practitioners access greater funding, best practices and support during emergencies.

The Roslyn Urban Forest has undergone significant work over the past few years to maintain a healthy forest and

watershed, provide recreation opportunities, and manage fuel loads to reduce the risk of wildfires. This summer, a crew from the Roslyn Fire Department accomplished fuel reduction work throughout the forest to prepare parts of the forest for prescribed burning this fall.

This forest health and fuel reduction work is part of a larger project being initiated on thousands of acres along Cle Elum Ridge—from the City of Roslyn, across private lands, to the Central Cascade Forest managed by The Nature Conservancy. This work around the larger Cle Elum area is part of larger Washington State collaborative planning efforts for both forest health and wildland fire protection (it's a priority landscape as identified in the Eastern Washington 20 Year Forest Health Strategic Plan and Wildland Fire Protection Plan). Partners see this year's TRES event as a model in building local ownership and capacity to accelerate pace and scale of forest health and community protection work.

After a summer of devastating fire outcomes for so many communities, many are feeling time is short in putting fire back to work for people and nature. Now's the time to step up.

MORE ONLINE

Aerial views of a 2018 TRES burn:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOYsau66sDw&feature=emb_logo

"Prescribed Fire Training in Roslyn Puts Emphasis on Local Efforts" (Luke Thompson, *Yakima Herald*)

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/prescribed-fire-training-in-roslyn-puts-emphasis-on-local-efforts/article_666294d3-139f-548e-8b06-d99ac46bde75.html

This story was originally the post "Local Leadership on Display at This Year's Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES)" on The Nature Conservancy in Washington's blog: <https://www.washingtonnature.org/fieldnotes/cascadia-tres-roslyn-local-leadership-on-display-at-this-years-prescribed-fire-training-exchange>.

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges 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 Marek Smith at marek_smith@tnc.org.

An equal opportunity provider