



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Building Fires Means Building Trust

Trinity Integrated Fire Management Partnership March 2015

In northern California, partners in the Trinity Integrated Fire Management Partnership implemented a 20-acre prescribed burn in Hayfork in early March. The success of this project—part of ongoing *Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency* (SPER) work in the area—is helping to build and strengthen local relationships.

“The major take-home message is trust,” says program manager Dave Jaramillo. “On a burn we need to trust each other and build that relationship.” He noted that the logistics of a burn are complex, and there is a lot at stake. When working with partners, the success and efficiency of the operations requires a lot of trust of your partners—burn crews need to know that they can rely on their partners to ensure that work is being implemented correctly and safely.

This process takes time and patience. “The more we burn together, the more we will trust each other,” says Jaramillo. “Many fire crews have worked together for a long time; they’re like a family. When someone you’ve worked with for a long time tells you, yes, that fire is out, you can

rely on it. When it’s someone you don’t know; you’re going to double-check.”

When working with prescribed fire in and near communities, one key to success is strong relationships with partners and with landowners. This means taking the time to build trust.

Trust is also an essential component with landowners. Building trust also means you have to be willing to listen, learn and address people’s concerns. “My biggest fear was that it would get away and cause a bigger fire,” reported the landowner where this fire was conducted, “but in the end I was very pleased with how it went.”

Jaramillo noted that patrol and mop up were priorities for the Firestorm crew on this burn. “It’s after the fire that’s the biggest concern to the burners: you can’t just walk away, you have to patrol. Due diligence is really important. I make that a priority.”

Strong communication and approaching landowners as partners goes a long way towards building trust. Says the landowner of Jaramillo, “He was excellent to work with; we stayed in touch constantly, and when he was there, he and I worked together. It was interesting because we both approached it as learning and it was nice to hear his perspective.”

The more landowners, and the community, observe success and competence, the more trust they will have in implementers—and in prescribed fire.



Program manager Dave Jaramillo and the owner of the land on which the burn was conducted share a moment of camaraderie after igniting the burn.
Photo: WRTC/Dave Jaramillo

Participating Agencies & Organizations

California Firesafe Council
Firestorm
Local landowners
North Coast Air Quality
Management District
The Nature Conservancy
The Watershed Center
USDA Forest Service—Shasta-
Trinity National Forest

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The Fire Learning Network (FLN) and Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency (SPER) 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.

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Oak woodlands provide rich and diverse habitat, but this forest type has been significantly impacted by encroaching conifers and past management practices. One of the objectives of the burn near Hayfork in the southern Klamath Mountains was to help revitalize this oak woodland.
Photo: WRTC/Dave Jaramillo



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