



Increasing Prescribed Fire Capacity: Using Youth Crews

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Proof of concept: In 2014, members of a Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew were a successful part the Black Lake TREX hosted by the Guild. © FSG



Next steps: In 2017, six Forest Stewards Youth Corps crews worked on two national forests after their orientation and training near Santa Fe. To date, the program has served youth from 16 to 19 years old. The fall 2018 program, for those from 18 to 25, will provide some of these crew members a next step on a path to a career in wildland fire. © FSG

SITUATION The frequent fire forests of the Southwest have a fire deficit. Prescribed fire and managed ignitions are the main tools to address this. Prescribed fire burn windows in the Southwest—New Mexico in particular—become available in early August as the July monsoonal pattern finishes, and extend into the fall. During August and September window, many Forest Service employees are still on fire suppression assignments. After September, many 1039-classified fire personnel time out of work, so the number of staff available to work prescribed fire diminishes during the fall season.

SOLUTION The Cibola and Santa Fe national forests and Forest Stewards Guild are working together to establish two young-adult crews to increase prescribed fire capacity on these national forests during the mid-August through November burn season. The Forest Stewards Youth Corps will be locally hired, and trained to NWCG standards; they will also receive New Mexico Forest Worker Safety Certification, CPR/First-Aid and defensive driving training, and take a S212 chainsaw class.

COSTS AND LOGISTICS Crews of 18- to 25-year-old fire workers will be stationed at ranger districts, but will be Guild employees, in an arrangement supported by the Youth and Training master participating agreement. The Guild also changed its workers compensation policy so that these crews can be correctly classified into the appropriate risk category.

The host ranger districts will provide crew oversight, burn projects, and non-burn work projects. Base wages for the crews are covered by a state grant, and some overtime pay will be available through the Rio Grande Water Fund. The state grant will also cover the cost of vehicles and crew training. The ranger districts will provide some PPE, with the Guild providing the rest.

HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THIS SOLUTION? The Forest Stewards Youth Corps is the logical extension of our longstanding program for high school students. Eligibility for those crews ended at age 19, except for those returning as trainers—just one per crew. Meanwhile, collaborative work with the national forests highlighted their fire managers' need for additional resources to meet ecological targets. The new crews will address the needs of both the young adults growing into fire careers and the national forests in meeting their management goals

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) are part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together* (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

For more information about work under the PERFACT agreement, contact Marek Smith at marek_smith@tnc.org or (919) 794-4374. For more about TREX, contact Jeremy Bailey at jeremy_bailey@tnc.org or (801) 599-1394 .



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