

May 2005



# FLN DISPATCH

*Emerging Lessons From  
The Fire Learning Network*

**FIRE LEARNING NETWORK** A cooperative project of The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, and the Dept. of the Interior, the network was created in 2002 to catalyze efforts to reduce hazardous fuels across the country. Part of the larger joint program *Restoring Fire-Adapted Ecosystems* that includes fire education and training components, the network operates at both local and national levels to overcome barriers to implementing ecologically appropriate fuels reduction and restoration projects.

<http://tnc-ecomanagement.org/fire>

**THE NATURE CONSERVANCY FIRE INITIATIVE** This 15-person team is working to assess, abate and prevent fire-related threats to biodiversity conservation around the world. In the U.S., the Initiative is working with a variety of partners to promote ecologically appropriate fire management, develop and implement science-based planning tools and monitoring techniques, and further fire education and training efforts.

<http://nature.org/fire>

The newest regional FLN will bring local communities, scientists and various agencies together to develop fuels management plans for ponderosa pine ecosystems in the northwestern U.S. Like some other areas across the country, the Northwest's ponderosa pine forests are presently experiencing unnaturally severe wildfires, largely as a result of decades of fire exclusion. These fires pose a significant threat to local communities, forests and overall ecosystem health, yet there does not seem to be general consensus about how to address the problem.

One obstacle is that there are differing opinions, even among experts, about where and how to treat forests that are suffering from a lack of fire. The **Northwest Fire Learning Network** will foster the creation of management plans that are developed through an inclusive process that takes into account both socioeconomic and ecological concerns. The goal is to develop scientifically sound plans that enjoy broad-based support and



The Northwest Fire Learning Network will focus on ponderosa pine forests such as this one adjacent to central Oregon's Metolius River.

—Photo by Larry N. Olson

## UPPER DESCHUTES BASIN PROJECT PARTNERS

- US Forest Service
- City and rural fire protection districts
- OR State University Extension Service
- Walker Range Forest Protective Assn.
- Private homeowner associations
- Bureau of Land Management
- OR Department of Forestry
- The Nature Conservancy
- Deschutes County
- Project Wildfire

For more information about the Northwest FLN or the Upper Deschutes project, contact Steve Buttrick at 503-230-1221 or [sbuttrick@tnc.org](mailto:sbuttrick@tnc.org).

that will, therefore, be implemented to effectively reduce fuel loads and restore ecological health to the area's forests.

The 2-million-acre Upper Deschutes Basin is the anchor project for the new network. This site was a "demonstration landscape" during the first phase of the national Fire Learning Network and is also a LAND-FIRE Application Project. In addition, five communities within the Upper Deschutes area are developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and there is also a "Fireshed Assessment" pilot project within the planning area. The FLN will complement these efforts by providing ecological models and other science-based tools, and help the people who are working at the community level better understand the ecological processes that are operating across the entire landscape.

"We're excited about this opportunity to accelerate the pace of fire-related restoration in the Northwest" said the Conservancy's Steve Buttrick. "We're confident that we can really make a difference, both for the Upper Deschutes and the across the region."

A number of other projects from Oregon and Washington have expressed an interest in joining the network, including the Middle Fork of the John Day River the Upper Sycan Marsh Watershed and the Tieton Project/Naches Basin. Several site visits will take place this summer to facilitate the assessment of local barriers to fire regime restoration. The first full meeting of the regional network is slated for fall 2005 in central Oregon. People or projects who would like to participate in the Network should contact Steve Buttrick at 503-230-1221 or Amy Waltz at 541-419-8895.

## GET INVOLVED!

If you're interested in participating in a regional or national level meeting, or just learning more:

- Browse the FLN Web site  
<http://tnc-ecomanagement.org/fire>
- Join and contribute to the FLN listserv  
<http://tnc-ecomanagement.org/fire/resources/#listserv>
- Contact TNC or agency leads:  
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Anne Jeffery, Dept. of the Interior  
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The Nature Conservancy  
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH