

FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES LEARNING NETWORK

The Watershed Center

The Watershed Center co-leads the FAC Network. The organization brings experience in local, regional, and national level community organizing around conservation.

The Nature Conservancy's Fire Learning Network

The Fire Learning Network co-leads the FAC Network. Their experience leading multi-scalar conservation learning networks helps guide the project.

The USDA Forest Service

The Forest Service supports the FAC Network through a cooperative agreement called "Promoting Ecosystem Resilience through Collaboration."

Photo right, by Will Harling

Satellite image bottom, courtesy Eytan Krasilovsky



LESSONS FROM THE 2013 WILDFIRE SEASON

FAC Network 1st Quarterly Webinar Summary

September 27, 2013

The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network connects people around the country working to make communities more resilient to the impacts of wildfire.



Webinar Participants

Network Staff & Funding Partners

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Lynn Decker
Lynn Jungwirth
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Tim Melchert
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Research Partners

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Hub Organization Representatives

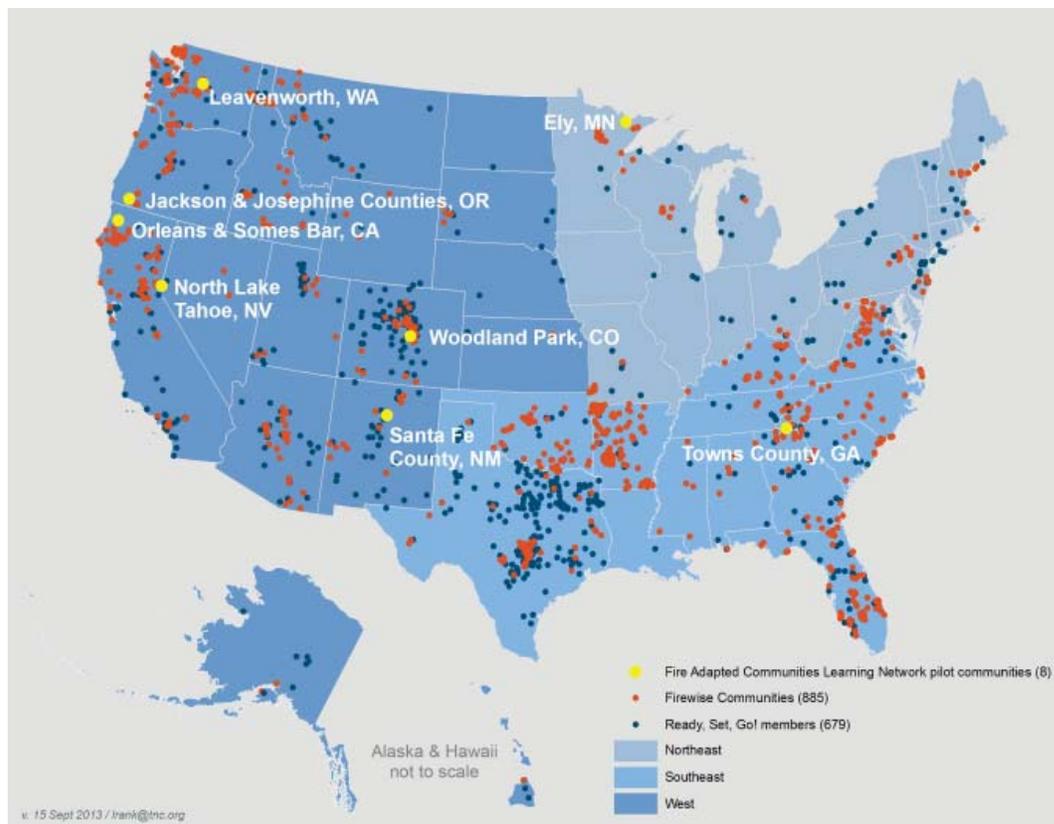
Annie Schmidt, Chumstick Wild-fire Coalition
Bill Tripp, Karuk Tribe
Eytan Krasilovsky, The Forest Guild
Forest Schafer, North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District
Frank Riley, Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D
Jim Wolf, Josephine and Jackson County Fire Plan
Jonathan Bruno, Coalition for the Upper South Platte
Katie Fernholz, Dovetail Partners

Participating Local Coordinating Group Partners

Barb Thompson
Chris Chambers
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Mike DeBonis
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2013 PILOT COMMUNITIES



Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network Project Developments

- Funding for the Network has been secured through December 2015. Network participants should use this date as they consider longer-range project planning and target accomplishments.
- Additional funding means the Network will be adding more Pilot Communities and Hub Organizations, as well as additional staff to help manage the Network.
- In addition to Quarterly Webinars where Network participants will be able to exchange ideas, there are several ways knowledge from the Network is being shared including the Network's Podio workspace, a webpage on fireadapted.org, and a series of feature stories based on lessons from the Network.
- Network staff are working with several researchers to learn more about resilience and adaptation. The research team will be studying how the learning network approach influences resilience at the local, regional, and national levels. Additional projects, including a resilience assessment, "scorecard", and other assessment tools, will be developed in conjunction with the research team. To learn more, contact Bruce, Brugo@colorado.edu or Sarah at smccaffrey@fs.fed.us.
- Network staff are pursuing several projects focused on Network-wide learning, including how Fire Adapted Communities strategies integrate with the WFDSS system, innovations in Community Wildfire Protection Planning, and best practices for engaging regional and state level partners in local and regional FAC coordination. In addition to these topics, the Network has produced a communications plan designed to facilitate communications at every level, from engaging local partners to informing decision makers and agency partners at the national level.
- More information about the structure and function of the FAC Learning Network is available at www.fireadapted.org. Questions about this document can be directed to Michelle Medley-Daniel at wrtc@hayfork.net or (530) 628-4206.

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LESSONS FROM THE 2013 WILDFIRE SEASON

Four of the eight Pilot Communities experienced active wildfires during the 2013 wildfire season. The Hub Organizations working with those communities agreed to share some of the lessons they learned through those experiences in the Network's first webinar. Each Hub Organization provided examples of Fire Adapted Communities strategies they've been implementing that led to positive outcomes during their local wildfire incident. They also identified strategies they plan to adjust based on their most recent experiences managing wildfire in their communities.

The Eagle Fire: Chumstick Watershed, Central WA



Annie Schmidt, Director of the Chumstick Wildfire Coalition, shared three examples of how they leveraged the capacity within their local Fire Adapted Communities coordinating group during the Eagle Fire to interface with Incident Command (IC), act as a communications liaison for the community, and provide critical after-fire information to residents.

Detailed knowledge of the Incident Command System allowed their group to make the critical connection between local community interests and Incident Commanders. Their familiarity with the IC system and reputation in the community allowed the Coalition to keep open communications between IC and the community. IC was able to utilize the community's own communications channels, such as existing public meetings and stakeholder mailing lists, because of their connection with the Coalition. And the community, in particular business owners and residents of the Chumstick Watershed, were able to communicate their specific concerns to IC through the Coalition.

Annie recommended two courses, available through the National Incident Management System, ICS 100 and IS700(a), to people who would like to learn more about the IC System. If completed, these courses offer a certificate that qualifies you to be utilized in a future incident.

Related to their direct connection with IC, the Chumstick Coalition also counts their communications strategy as a big success during this incident.

In a community like theirs, where the economy is driven by tourism, a wildfire can have serious economic impacts. By working closely with business owners and IC, they were able to get messages about local businesses being open into official information reports, alleviating impacts to businesses.

They plan to focus on business resilience related to wildfire incidents as a result of what they learned from the Eagle Fire. Wildfire will continue to be a

Learning more about the Incident Command System will prepare your community to effectively interface with officials in the event of a wildfire. There are several courses offered through the National Incident Management System that can help.

challenge to tourism-driven economies, but with deliberate planning, frequent communication and by involving business owners in their FAC efforts, the Coalition hopes to improve this aspect of community resilience.

Lastly, Annie shared lessons about after-fire response. In the Chumstick, they worked quickly to inform residents about potential sediment flows if heavy rains were to follow the wildfire. They developed and distributed door hangers for residents of the watershed, partnering with the local Volunteer Fire Department to distribute the information. Just three days later, flash flood warnings were issued for the area. While they were able to get the information out to the community ahead of the threat thanks to the Volunteers (who helped with the project as part of one of their training modules) they'd like to be ready well in advance of the next incident.

They plan to begin preparing now by developing an after-fire tool kit with press releases, public service announcements, and outreach materials. They will be connecting with their partners to develop this tool kit, and plan to share it with the Network when complete. You can read more about the Eagle Fire at <http://fireadapted.org/region/fac-learning-network.aspx>

LESSONS FROM THE 2013 WILDFIRE SEASON

The Salmon & Orleans Fire Complexes: Mid-Klamath, Northern CA

Bill Tripp, Eco-cultural Resource Specialist for the Karuk Tribe, worked on the fires in the Mid-Klamath for weeks. During that time, innumerable lessons were learned. He shared several with the Network, including successes in utilizing local knowledge, and lessons about communications and operations.

Within the first hour of the Dance Fire in Orleans, the community had sprung into action. The fire was moving quickly through town, and evacuations were issued for several hundred residents. The Karuk Tribe initiated its emergency support functions and opened an evacuation shelter that was completely operational and stocked within four hours. This scenario had been the #1 threat identified in their CWPP and it played out exactly as described in that document. Unfortunately, many of the mitigations recommended were not yet in place, and one home, as well as several outbuildings and vehicles, were lost in the fire.

The Mid-Klamath is Karuk ancestral territory, and Tribal resources and cultural specialists were called on to participate in managing these wildfires. While this allowed Tribal members to participate in guiding the management of the fires, protecting cultural and community resources, it was taxing on the resources and capacity of the Tribe.

In prolonged emergency situations, such as these fire complexes, all parties involved are called on to work extremely long hours, often performing duties beyond their normal assignments. Many of these people end up being uncompensated for their

extra efforts. The Tribe was able to leverage some of the time donated by its staff and other community members, and use it as a match to disaster relief funding awarded on the basis of a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

Another success Bill highlighted was the community's use of a dedicated Facebook page to share information about the fire complexes. The page sparked community dialogues, facilitated supply deliveries, and was a way for residents to post ideas and concerns about the management of the fires and the forest landscape.

Unfortunately, local FS personnel were banned from posting to the site, and had to indirectly communicate through community members to users of the page. Public Information Officer permission to use sites such as this has been identified as a strategy to work on in the future.

Lastly, Bill offered several lessons connected to suppression

operations. Throughout these wildfires, community members worked alongside fire personnel bringing their knowledge of the landscape, previous treatments, and local conditions to the effort. Their participation was critical. Through the designated Tribal and community liaisons, they were able to influence firing strategies, employing a tactic called defensive firing, that ultimately led to better on-the-ground outcomes. The liaisons were also able to encourage the use of pre-treated control features.

The community is planning an After Action Review retreat to document the lessons they learned from these fires, and plans to share their insights with the Network. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/537554202959342/> to learn more.

"The Orleans Fire really highlighted for me how much we depend on EVERYONE in this town when a fire like that hits. I heard so many stories about individuals who took it upon themselves to protect theirs and others homes as the fire approached and embers ignited spot fires around them.

Working ... to ID potential containment lines and prepare them quickly helped reaffirm for me how important it is for us to game out where good containment lines are BEFORE the fire comes."

-Will Harling, Orleans/Somes Bar Fire Safe Council

LESSONS FROM THE 2013 WILDFIRE SEASON

Tres Lagunas & Thompson Ridge Fires: Santa Fe County, NM

Eytan Krasilovsky, Community Forestry Coordinator for The Forest Guild, shared lessons from the Tres Lagunas and Thompson Ridge Fires in New Mexico.

One of the points Eytan stressed was that they are still *reacting* to fires. Even using existing standards, which appear to be inadequate as drought, WUI growth, and declining forest health converge, there are not enough fuels treatments in place. Nor are those treatments adequate. Landowners who had taken the recommended precautions suffered in the 2013 wildfires when extreme fire behavior, driven by an extremely dry fuel source, rendered their treatments ineffective. As a result, one landowner described the following scenario: "The Incident Command Team put dozer lines across my property knowing it wasn't going to stop the fire, but to show that they were 'fighting' it. Even after BAER rehab, I'm left with these lines." This situation highlights several issues that local FAC coordination plans to address including planning for extreme events, evaluating expectations, and improving recommended treatment prescriptions.

The Tres Lagunas fire at one point headed northwest toward the Santa Fe municipal watershed. It then pushed east towards the Gallinas, the municipal watershed of Las Vegas. With so many communities' critical infrastructure at risk to wildfire impacts, it is important to engage utilities, and city and county governments across jurisdictions to coordinate around FAC principles.

Santa Fe County and the City of Santa Fe are coordinating efforts, particularly around one high risk community that straddles the City/County jurisdic-

tional boundary. The City of Santa Fe is launching a FAC coordinating group after participating in FAC training through FEMA. The Forest Guild is working with them, and by coordinating efforts, they'll be able to bridge County and City jurisdictional boundaries.

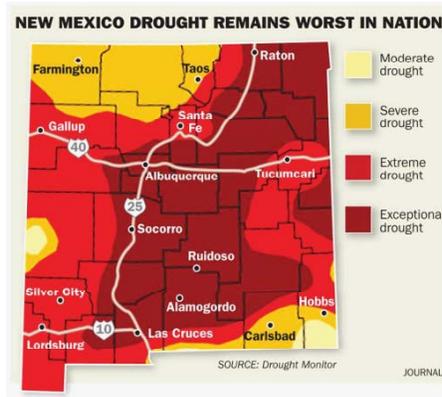
Building on the synergy between the Fire Learning Network (FLN) and the Fire Adapted Communities Network, lessons learned from the Black Lake prescribed fire training exchange (TRES) sponsored by the FLN will be valuable to Santa Fe County as they explore controlled burning as a treatment tool that supports FAC. Learn more about the TRES here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30YtKeuRM3k>

Another success story, the Thompson Ridge Fire was a culturally sensitive operation due to ongoing collaboration around historic and prehistoric cultural resources in the area. Incident Command was able to effectively coordinate with the Tribe to manage the fire around those resources with good results.

These wildfires have created renewed interest in Santa Fe County communities preparing for wildfire. In some cases former Firewise communities are reaching out to participate in FAC; other communities new to risk reduction efforts are also seeking to participate. In November, the Forest Guild will host a workshop entitled "Living with Fire in Northern New Mexico". This will be a great opportunity for local coordination around FAC concepts, and lessons from the workshop will be provided to Network participants.

The Southwest Fire Science Consortium is synthesizing information and lessons from the 2013 fire season. Once completed, their report will be shared with the Network.

"I had 4+ fires start from downed electric lines in my district... Now when I have hand crews available...I send them out to known power line hotspots and proactively down hazard trees. The rural electric co-ops thank me." - NM State Forestry



LESSONS FROM THE 2013 WILDFIRE SEASON

The Douglas Fire Complex: Douglas and-Josephine Counties, Southern OR

Jim Wolf, coordinator of the Josephine and Jackson County Fire Plan, along with a number of members of his local FAC coordinating group participated in the webinar. Jim offered several insights gleaned from their experiences in the 2013 wildfire season.

Dry lightning storms ignited a series of fires that resulted in an Incident Command Team, as well as State Fire Marshall and National Guard response.

Homes were threatened, though at a distance, and one firefighter was killed in a vehicle accident. All told, the 2013 wildfires burned 47,000 acres in the Rogue Basin and cost \$51 million to suppress.

Over the past decade, the communities in the Rogue Basin in Southern Oregon have been working on FAC strategies. With two-thirds of all of the homes in the Basin within 1/2 mile of federal land, the area is an enormous Wildland Urban Interface. The checkerboard of federal and private ownership presents a challenging situation that necessitates tight coordination. With over 170 entities involved in local fire planning and CWPP development, they're a model of local coordination.

The relationships developed over the last ten years, as community leaders and agency personnel have treated over 200,000 acres, have proven as valuable as the fuels treatments themselves. While the fuels treatments have helped contain fires, and provided safety for fire managers, the relationships developed between staff at agencies, in county and city government, in emergency response, and at NGOs have all been leveraged in a time when shrinking budgets and diminishing capacity are crippling institutions.

Southern Oregon University completed a survey of Basin residents, finding that 90% felt they had a responsibility to take action to reduce fire risk. Of those surveyed, 94% had implemented defensible space treatments.

With a solid foundation of long-standing coordination, and an educated and pro-active population, the Rogue Basin was well prepared for the 2013 fire season, and no homes were lost.

Structural/city fire departments used to have to

wait for an Incident Command Team in order to respond to an incident. Through training and coordination, they have been able to overcome that hurdle, and now use local fire resources to manage those departments resulting in quicker wildland fire response and

improved management.

Jim describes their FAC efforts as at a tipping point. They've built considerable capacity, invested in a network of landscape treatments, and continue to invest in coordination, but they'll need to keep investing in those things in order to maintain the resiliency they've grown. They're ready to scale up and move some of their treatments into maintenance mode, but with less funding for public land treatments and coordination, they may be unable to maintain what's already been invested in, let alone do more.

They've identified sustaining and broadening their collaborative framework to include fire response support and forest restoration as well as identifying and maintaining priority existing fuel treatments as critical components going forward.

FAC coordinators in Southern Oregon's Rogue Basin are working toward a landscape strategy that is financially, socially, and economically viable.



FAC NETWORK EMERGENT LEARNING

Though not directly impacted by wildfires this season, the other four Hub Organizations had plenty to share with the Network as they reflected on their FAC efforts this first quarter. The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, Coalition for the Upper South Platte, Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D, and Dovetail Partners shared some of what they're learning as they implement FAC strategies in communities around the country.

Fire districts have traditionally had a suppression-driven mission. In North Lake Tahoe they're finding that by shifting their mission to include community organizing and FAC coordination, they can more effectively achieve their goals. The Department is hosting block parties, community work days, attending festivals and farmer's markets, and giving presentations to the community in an effort to engage and recruit community members in FAC efforts.



By filling the void left when the Nevada Fire Safe Council went bankrupt, the District is supporting community leaders who can effectively carry FAC forward. While shifting focus to community organizing has proven successful, the District is also grappling with challenges including over-reliance on grant funding. Some Districts in the Tahoe Basin are seeking board approval for a special benefit assessment that would help alleviate funding problems, but resources remain an issue.

Local coordination in Ely Minnesota has been progressing well with FAC stakeholders participating in meetings, conference calls, and interviews to gather information about local conditions as well as statewide/regional needs and capacity.



They've found an enthusiastic partner in the state-wide Firewise group. They are also working with the USFS to integrate the FAC team with their program of work. As they build local interest and capacity for FAC they are particularly focusing on engaging planning professionals.



The Coalition for the Upper South Platte, and their many partners in the Front Range of Colorado, were awarded \$1 million to support landscape treat-

ments that further FAC strategies. Their proposal was selected in part due to the comprehensive and integrated FAC framework that they're implementing.

They also shared insights about the impacts of climate change necessitating proactive treatments, and deliberate attention to monitoring results. Their efforts continue to emphasize adaptation.

In addition to garnering financial support to implement important landscape treatments, the group shared how they've engaged a local university in a local FAC branding effort designed to attract the participation of community members, especially the younger generation.



Towns County, GA is focusing on community organizing and partnership building as core FAC strategies. Their efforts to enroll communities in the Firewise and Ready, Set, Go! programs have paid off with several new communities, including a local university, participating.

With strong political and land manager support for FAC efforts, they are reaching out through schools, universities, neighborhood groups and churches to engage citizens in the work. They are forming a citizen's coalition to help carry the message and work of FAC forward.

They will be hosting a workshop on codes in October, the results of which will be shared with the Network.

Your Questions Answered

Is there a FAC Network logo we should use?

There is no official logo for the FAC Learning Network, yet. We plan to work on branding as part of our communications plan implementation. We'll share logos and other materials as they are finalized through Podio, and by email.

Will the slides from the webinar be available?

Yes. You can see all of the slides from this webinar under "Presentations" on the Podio workspace. The file is too large for email. If you have trouble accessing the presentation, contact Michelle at wrtc@hayfork.net

I'd like to participate in the resilience assessment that's been mentioned. Will we be able to?

We would like to use the Network to pilot the resilience assessment. We'll share it with you as soon as it's ready to go.

FROM THE CHAT BOX...

In addition to the presentations shared by Network participants, several topics were raised using the webinar chat function.

Post-fire communications: do any of the Hub Organizations have post-fire communications materials they could share with the Network?

There are some examples available on www.waldofire.org

The FS is working on a FAC communications tool kit that will include some post-fire materials. They will share that as soon as it is ready.

Impacts of wildfires on businesses: strategies for engaging businesses in FAC and managing the impacts of wildfire, particularly on tourism, is identified as a learning topic.

Participants from Leavenworth, the Rogue Basin, and Colorado would like to pursue this. Tony Cheng plans to share information from a workshop this past June on the topic.

Local Area Advisory Agreements: models of formal and informal engagement between local individuals and groups with Incident Command is identified as a learning topic.

The Watershed Center will share Trinity County's "local area advisor" program set up through the local Office of Emergency Services. In this program, pre-designated Local Area Advisors from around the county can plug directly into Incident Management Teams.

In some of Sarah McCaffrey's research, connection with IC was identified as a big issue. She will share a summary of that study with Network participants.

How do we sustain our FAC work in a climate of diminishing funds and institutional capacity?

As we face the challenges of increasing need and urgency to manage wildfire risk, with less funding to do so, we hope that learning networks, like the FAC Network will be able to deliver the innovations and best practices the situation requires to people around the country working toward resilience.

WHAT'S NEXT

Stay in touch with Network proceedings by participating in discussions, reviewing articles and reports, and sharing your insight on the group's Podio workspace.

Mark your calendars for the 2nd FAC Learning Network Webinar, December 13th, 2013.

Hub Organizations' mid-term reports are due December 31st.



Left: The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network at the 2013 Network kick-off meeting in Boise, ID.