

Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network

Members of the FAC Net share a vision of accelerating the adoption of fire adapted community concepts across the nation using a tested learning network approach.

Increasing Wildfire Resilience in Communities Coast to Coast

The Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (FAC Net) is designed to spread the best ideas and approaches to building wildfire resilience in communities throughout the U.S. When the FAC Net was launched in 2013—with eight diverse communities and organizations representing a wide range of places across the country—the intention was to use those locations as centers of excellence from which to grow a network of people and places committed to becoming better adapted to fire. Central to the effort has been the strategy of engaging FAC practitioners to be not only the people who take action in their own communities, but who carry and spread the message to their peers in other places. By creating a network of FAC practitioners, we are able to elevate real-life examples—and the people who live FAC on a daily basis become the messengers for the cause.

The FAC Net provides multiple layers of value to individuals, organizations and agencies, communities, and to the public as a whole.

- Individuals benefit through the opportunity to co-create a community of people who are passionate about FAC and who are willing to share their time and talents with other members of the network.
- Agencies charged with managing our natural resources, and organizations committed to community and environmental resilience, have a forum in which to deeply engage in taking action and sharing responsibility.
- Communities are connected internally to the capacity that emerges when people gather to coordinate about FAC actions, and to people in other places who are willing to offer new perspectives and to help each other across geographic space and organizational divides.
- Nationally, the FAC Net is helping to untangle the “wildfire problem” by spreading the best ideas and connecting people who are working at every scale to create a more wildfire resilient future.



Collective Value Proposition

FAC Net members gathered in Santa Fe in June for the annual workshop. While there, they developed a value proposition for the network that will be a touchstone and guide as the network grows and evolves.



We help society live safely with fire.

This is accomplished by network members as they:

- share inspiration, innovations, ideas, lessons learned and best practices;
- create and maintain connections;
- enable their communities to become more fire resilient;
- foster and grow sub-networks;
- create a broader understanding of FAC concepts and principles;
- influence policy and funding; and
- develop products that FAC practitioners can use in their communities and regions.

“The value of the network is hard to quantify, but equally hard to overstate. The communication and sharing between network members, conversations with our liaison, and lessons learned from others have been invaluable. Even ‘small’ questions and contacts have fostered a more connected network so it is easier to call with ‘big’ questions!”



At least nine FAC Net members hosted events for the national Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on May 2. In Ashland (OR), Project Wildfire hosted FireFree, a yard waste disposal event; on the first weekend, residents brought in 31.5% more than they did last year. The city's Firewise Clean Up Day, held a week earlier, collected 152 carloads of yard debris—and provided people with help unloading and information on wildfire safety. In Colorado, the Coalition for the Upper South Platte organized a crew of 30 cadets from the nearby Air Force base; along with some community volunteers, they logged more than 500 hours, removing overly-dense, standing dead, poor-performing and unhealthy trees from easements and private and community property. Towns County (GA) staged a full-scale training exercise in a community subdivision, simulating a house fire turned wildfire. More about these projects is in the network's blog at <http://facnetwork.org/national-wildfire-community-preparedness-day-2015/>.

Photos: Alison Green, Steve Parks, CUSP, Frank Riley

Organizing Volunteers

In early June, the Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition partnered with the Chelan County and Washington Department of Natural Resources to host a free brush disposal day at the county transfer station. Twenty-eight landowners participated, logging 246 volunteer hours to prepare their homes for wildfire. Staff also implemented a mobile chipping program where 24 participants contributed a total of 1,400 hours of in-kind match (or the equivalent of \$28,000 cash match) performing fuel reduction work on their properties.

Winning at Reducing Risk

The Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project entry in the Solution Search “Reducing Our Risk” contest won the People's Choice Award this spring. The contest helped raise awareness of wildfire risk—and actions that can mitigate that risk—and the funds will help them implement treatments in two key watersheds, making the city and its water supply less vulnerable to severe fire and post-fire flooding. Read about the project at <http://solutionsearch.org/entityform/139>.

Growing a Movement

The FAC Net was originally launched as a pilot project to test a network approach to fire adapted communities. The central question was, “Can we spread innovation and ideas and improve community wildfire resilience by building a nation-wide network of FAC practitioners?” Within the first year, we began seeing results: more partnerships, and deeper ones; higher profiles for members, enabling them to attract resources and investments in FAC work; peer learning and exchanges that seeded new approaches and started helping solve problems. The network approach was working. On determining that the FAC Net was, in fact, an effective way to spread FAC ideas, network organizers, members and funders began rapidly

“I think at a state level and national level...the more of these relationships we're building and information we're sharing, I really feel like there's enough energy and push to make changes at the policy level, or the landscape level. People are thinking differently about how to live with fire and I think this is part of the reason.”

“The relationships that are built through the FAC network really leave a strong and safe place to talk about the challenges that we have and ways to move past those challenges. It's a place we can really talk about failures and a place where we can really share our successes, and there is a lot in between.”

expanding and strengthening the network. Our approach has been to grow the network—and our impact—while remaining nimble and responsive to the needs and changing conditions of communities taking FAC actions.

The original eight network members all remain engaged and committed to the FAC Net, and all of them have deepened their FAC practice and grown the movement by spreading ideas to hundreds of local, regional and national partners. Since the FAC Net's launch we've added nine additional “core members,” further diversifying the kinds of communities and organizations that demonstrate FAC activities within the network. In the coming year we are poised to grow the network even more.

Investments in state and regional sub-networks that operate as affiliates

USDA Forest Service and the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network

Network members are working closely with Forest Service Fire Management Officers, District Rangers, Public Information Officers and others to implement sophisticated FAC programs across the country. In addition to conducting prescribed burns and other fuels reduction projects, these Forest Service staff carry out various types of public outreach, make grants, participate in training exercises, attend planning meetings, organize field trips, provide technical assistance and participate in long-range visioning and capacity building. Thirteen National Forests and three Forest Service research stations are partnering with FAC Net member organizations. For example:

- In Southern Oregon, the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project is an example of how formal partnerships and the right tools can help accomplish work across ownership boundaries. Forest Service staff and their partners are not only implementing fuels treatments that protect the community water supply, they are also planning for long-term resilience. By investing in coordination, the Forest Service, City of Ashland, The Nature Conservancy and other partners are taking meaningful, far-sighted FAC actions.
- In California, staff from the Klamath and Six Rivers National Forests are working closely with the Karuk Tribe and community partners to adapt fire management in the region to provide cultural and resource benefits and community protection. A Two Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership award—along with support from the Fire Learning Network and FAC Net—is helping take their vision to scale, and spread their learning across the country.



Top: The USFS Region 8 Regional Frester visited the Towns County (GA) FAC program, including (at left) the FMO for the Chattahoochee-Oconee NF. *Bottom:* An Island Park (ID) resident discussed fuels management with District Rangers from the Caribou-Targhee and Gallatin NFs during a FAC Net field tour. *Photos:* USFS/A. Polk, TNC/W. Fulks

Fire Drill!

The North Lake Tahoe area FAC Net helped lead a city-wide evacuation drill in Incline Village, Nevada. According to the FAC Net lead, “The evacuation drill enhanced regional emergency response partnerships, and improved community readiness for evacuation. The drill involved 1,200 residential structures. Approximately 250 regional agency staff were involved in the drill, and 750 residents evacuated and attended the safety expo” as part of the drill.

BloombergBusiness had a good article about the drill (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-06-08/everybody-out-evacuating-an-entire-city-to-prepare-for-fire-season>).

of the national network are also being planned, in California, Colorado, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, and in the Southeast. In Washington, a state network has already launched with seven participating communities. Among the new network's members are communities that sustained serious losses in the 2014 Carlton Complex Fires. The Washington network is helping them share their learning as they rebuild a more resilient state.

Taking Collective Action

As relationships among FAC Net members have deepened—and the connections between the FAC work in various member communities has become more apparent—participants have begun to find ways to leverage their involvement in the network by co-designing and implementing projects. For example, FAC Net members in Texas and Idaho were surprised to discover they had much in common: both departments face significant WUI challenges, and both have turned to FAC approaches to help their communities live safely with wildfire. And so the Austin and Boise fire departments identified an opportunity to develop a set of learning exchanges that helped expand both departments' views on how they can take FAC actions and support wildfire resilience in their respective places. Members of the two fire departments conducted in-person learning exchanges, in February and May, during which the firefighters discussed a range of topics, from natural resource management, controlled burning, using goats to reduce

hazardous fuel levels and types of wildland firefighting equipment, to evacuation planning, preparedness and public outreach. They also shared tips on effecting cultural change within fire departments. A video, with interviews, insights and lessons from the first exchange, which took place in Austin, was produced by the FAC Net and is available to other communities on the network's YouTube channel (<https://youtu.be/rKVGiLpxnnA>). This exchange has sparked the interest of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), a FAC Coalition partner, and FAC Net and IAFC plan to work together to expand this initiative in the coming year.

In addition to connecting fire departments to help transform their approaches to helping their communities better adapt to fire, network members are seeing



Austin-Boise learning exchange. *Photos:* TNC/W. Fulks

opportunities to work together on municipal watershed source protection, customized approaches to engaging home and landowners, ways to use fire as a tool, and incorporating FAC practices into revisions of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. These were among the topics identified at the annual workshop as themes for a series of communities of practice (CoPs) that will connect people working on similar issues. These CoPs will support knowledge-sharing relationships and learning, and will also help identify opportunities for collective projects. The FAC Net will be engaging many additional partners and issue area experts as we explore and build these eight communities of practice together.

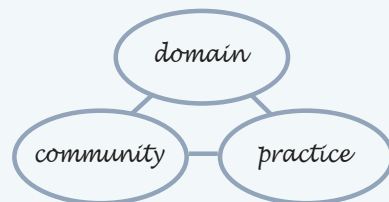
Growing in Washington

At the end of June, the Washington FAC Learning Network officially launched, taking the FAC Net model to the state scale. The first seven members of this new network are Seattle City Light-Skagit Hydroelectric Project, Flowery Trails Homeowner Association, Hidden Valley/Swauk, Okanogan County Conservation District, San Juan Island, Lincoln County Conservation District, and Yakima County Fire Adapted Communities Coalition. For more, see their blog entry at <http://facnetwork.org/washington-fac-network-press-release/>.

“The main thing we’ve gotten out of [being in the FAC Net] that has been so critical, is being able to leverage the resources within the network, the things that other people have done that we can replicate, learn from, and just the resources provided from the network help get us off the ground and ... we can be part of a national effort. That’s very important ...this is a national priority, a national effort that were a part of. So we’re getting so much out of being part of the network. We wouldn’t be doing this without it.”

Looking Ahead: Communities of Practice

At a joint national workshop in June, the FAC Net and Fire Learning Network together began laying out a plan to identify and develop communities of practice in key areas that will improve our collective ability to live with fire. The work began with a presentation by Bruce Goldstein to create a shared understanding. In the model we are using, a CoP has three parts: The *domain* is what the people in a CoP care about or do, their common ground issues. The *community* is the set of people who trust one another enough to interact effectively—it includes shared goals and beliefs, collective stories, a sense of purpose and common identity. The *practice* is the work or activity—the way things get done through methods, techniques, tools, specialized language and the stories told about using these. Practice is not just expertise—it is also social interaction and cultural understanding.



Domains Selected for Development by Networks

- Community Capacity Building
- Fire as a Tool
- FAC and the Fire Service
- “Next Generation” Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)
- Watershed Management
- Forest Treatment Economics
- Public Outreach and Engagement
- Working with Landowners and Homeowners

Stories from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network

One of the activities at the annual workshop was a variation on the idea of “StoryCorps,” in which members of the FAC Net, Fire Learning Network, partners and guests recorded interviews with each other. The quotes in this document were selected from some of those interviews.

For more stories from members of the FAC Net, visit the network’s blog (<http://facnetwork.org>). New stories about their work and lessons learned are posted twice weekly.



Member posts on the blog cover a wide range of topics—reflecting the wide array of issues to be addressed by communities becoming fire adapted. For example, members from Flagstaff wrote about their “Yellow Belly Ponderosa” student outreach effort, while New Mexico shared a success story about expanding the ability to conduct pile burns to remove thinned fuels.

Photos: Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership; Forest Guild



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