



NATIONAL FIRE LEARNING NETWORK MEETING – September 2008

Western Stewardship Summit: Restoring Community and the Land (Sunriver, OR)

The first *Western Stewardship Summit: Restoring Community and the Land* convened in Sunriver, Oregon September 24-26, 2008. The Summit was hosted by Sustainable Northwest and co-sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and six other organizations – American Lands Alliance, Lake County Resources Initiative, Resource Innovations, Wallowa Resources, Watershed Research & Training Center and Wildlands CPR – and attracted over 250 participants from numerous other organizations and government agencies. The Fire Learning Network was well-represented, with 23 FLN leaders and partners in attendance – almost 10% of the total Summit participation. As intended, the Summit proved to be an excellent opportunity for FLN members to meet with each other and with partners, present and potential. It also allowed others to meet the FLN.

Other FLN goals for the Summit involved getting the word out: It's unlikely that anyone left the Summit without having met FLN members and seen FLN presentations. We were able to share some of the tangible successes that have resulted from the FLN process. For example, the Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative participated in a roundtable discussion about management across ownership boundaries; in fact, they more than discussed such collaboration, they demonstrated it. A representative from each partner organization and agency in the collaboration spoke at the roundtable: Betsy Bloomfield (The Nature Conservancy), Phil Rigdon (Yakama Nation Department of Natural Resources), George Shelton (Washington Department of Natural Resources), Randy Shepard (USDA Forest Service), Jeff Tayler (Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife).

The FLN's presence at the Summit also served to bring fire to the fore. Although many of the stewardship projects and collaborations represented at the conference dealt with fire in some manner, the importance of fire was made more explicit by the presentations and conversations and expertise that the FLN brought. For example, Amy Waltz (Northwest) moderated a panel on community-based fire restoration (and the panel included Suzanne Hickey (Great Plains) and Will Harling, a partner of Nick Goulette (California Klamath-Siskiyou) who is interested in the FLN).

Finally, the FLN provided both ecological and geographic diversity to the mix – while much of the habitat being discussed was western forest, the FLN brought a large contingent from the grasslands of the Great Plains, as well as Margit Bucher (Southern Blue Ridge) and McRee Anderson (South Central) from points even further east. In addition to Suzanne Hickey's presentation mentioned above, Jim Luchsinger (Middle Niobrara Program Director) presented the grassland case study at one of the plenary sessions, Craig Bienz (Sycan Marsh Preserve Director) spoke on a panel on restoring grazed landscapes, and Ray Guse (Refugio-Goliad Prairie) presented a poster on prescribed fire.

This brief summary can only begin to describe the richness of the experience at the Summit, and the FLN participation in it. However, the Summit didn't end with the closing words. All PowerPoint presentations and posters have been posted to an online library, and follow-up materials will be added as necessary. The organizers hope that the Summit itself was merely the beginning of a continuing series of conversations among participants.

A Few Words from the Summit

It blows me away to hear the similarities.

Suzanne Hickey (Great Plains FLN)
who came to the Summit expecting to have little in common with the west

We need to move from single-resource maximization to multiple-outcome optimization.

Martin Goebel (President, Sustainable Northwest)
quoting Brad Zenger in his opening remarks (then repeated often throughout the Summit)

We were a timber town, and then [with the spotted owl and similar issues] we became a biodiversity town.

Timber paid better.

Lynn Jungwirth (California Klamath-Siskiyou FLN)
on the economic history of Hayfork, CA

Stopping controlled burning doesn't stop the burning, just the control.

Will Harling (Orleans/Somes Bar FireSafe Council)

The greatest tragedies in life aren't from the conflict between good and evil; the greatest tragedies in life are in the conflicts between good and good.

Lynn Jungwirth. *quoting her father*

Great conference, with lots of networking ... the summit was very powerful: I say this in light of so much emphasis on wild- and prescribed fire, and on the global warming challenges we face.

Ray Guse (Great Plains FLN), *summarizing nicely*