

November 2004

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-ecomangement.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>

This story was contributed by John André, Ecologist, Ozark-St. Francis National Forest, Arkansas.

Recently, the Bayou Ecosystem Restoration Project was awarded the Regional Forester's Honor Award for "Natural Resources Stewardship" in the USFS Southern Region. This honor and our numerous on-the-ground restoration successes are due in great part to the Fire Learning Network.

The Bayou Ecosystem Restoration Project is a cooperative effort to reduce fuels, reintroduce fire as an ecosystem process, and restore forests and woodlands across 60,000 acres of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest's Bayou Ranger District. Thus far, the project has attracted more than \$400,000 in funding, and includes 10 state, federal and private partners.

Although ecosystem management concepts have guided our work on the



Monitoring data from 96 plots indicates that the Bayou District's restoration treatments have significantly increased the diversity of understory species in treated areas. Photo by John André.

SOUTHCENTRAL FLN FAST FACTS

- Key fire-adapted conservation targets: oak and pine woodlands and savannas, glades, blackland prairie
- The Network is helping projects overcome common barriers related to science, funding, policy and public education
- Sites enrolled to-date: Seven, from Arkansas, Kentucky and Oklahoma
- Next workshop: May 2005 (will include 3-5 new sites)
- Contacts: McRee Anderson (501-804-3250) and John André (479-284-3150)

District for the past 10 years, it wasn't until 2002 that we really started making a difference across the landscape. In hindsight, what we lacked was exactly what the FLN had to offer: a robust process for developing scientifically defensible fire restoration projects that garner broad-based partner support. For example, our team used the products we created through our participation in the FLN to develop the NEPA documents for the project, scientifically demonstrate the effectiveness of our program, and educate the public about our work. The Network also provided tools to help us improve the effectiveness of our collaboration efforts.

Prior to our involvement in the network, we treated about 1,000 acres with prescribed fire each year. In 2004, by contrast, we burned 18,000 acres, and we mechanically treated 2,600 acres. Fifty-acre demonstration sites have evolved into 500-acre treatment areas, and we are even applying fire on adjacent private lands. Also, thanks to our monitoring program, our successes are backed up by scientific data that we expect will generate additional resources and support.

Today, a suite of regional Fire Learning Networks is effectively communicating and applying the successes of the national FLN to many more landscape-scale fire restoration projects. As the anchor project for the **Southcentral Regional Fire Learning Network**, those of us working on the Bayou Ecosystem Restoration Project are sharing what we've learned with six other fire restoration projects. Collaboration at the regional level will benefit everyone involved and, more importantly, benefit fire-adapted ecosystems in the Southcentral US.

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-ecomangement.org/fire>
- Join and contribute to the FLN listserv
<http://tnc-ecomangement.org/fire/resources/#listserv>
- Contact TNC or agency leads:
Lynn Decker, The Nature Conservancy Fire Initiative ldecker@tnc.org; 801-973-0804

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The Nature
Conservancy
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH