

July 2006



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://tncfire.org/usfln>

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY FIRE INITIATIVE This 19-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 Nature Conservancy
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

According to Jim McCoy, wildlife biologist and fire management officer for Land Between The Lakes National Recreation Area (LBL), his project has reaped numerous benefits from his participation in the South Central Fire Learning Network. For example, the Network provided him with time-saving NEPA-related templates that allowed him to stretch appropriated funds for prescribed burning further, and accomplish more on the ground than he would have otherwise.

LBL's 8,755-acre Prior Creek ecosystem restoration project has especially benefited from tools related to collaboration. "The FLN walked us through the process of building a core group of key collaborators," said McCoy. These new partners are providing critical guidance and support, and helping develop a broader vision for ecological restoration at LBL that includes new tools such as stewardship contracting. "Frankly, we wouldn't be as far along, nor would our decisions be as well-



Land Between The Lakes is the only National Recreation Area currently enrolled in the U.S. Fire Learning Network. © LBL National Recreation Area

LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES NATIONAL RECREATION AREA PRIOR CREEK ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT

General location: Southwestern Kentucky and northwestern Tennessee

Area: 8,755 acres

Proposed Forest Management Action: Mechanical thinning (single-tree selection and small group selection) of a maximum 2,600 acres of forest on dry and xeric sites to restore oak savannas (a reduction from approximately 100 trees/acre to approximately 50 trees/acre in patches on dry and xeric sites)

Project Rationale: Fire alone is not enough to reach restoration goals in an acceptable time frame

For more information about this project, contact Jim McCoy at jrmccoy@fs.fed.us or 270-924-2048.

informed, were it not for these evolving partnerships. My hope is that they will continue to grow over time," said Bill Lisowsky, area supervisor for LBL.

Collaboratively completing FLN workshop assignments prompted McCoy to develop stronger ties with colleagues who subsequently became key internal partners, including the staff archaeologist and LBL staff from other functional areas. "This may sound strange, but strengthening in-house collaboration has probably been the single biggest benefit of our participation in the FLN," said McCoy.

The South Central FLN held its fourth workshop last month in Texarkana, Texas. Twenty-one participants discussed long-term monitoring plans, engaging private landowners and the future of the regional network. Most participants wanted to continue meeting regularly, and some expressed a desire to recruit and mentor new fire restoration projects.

In the meantime, McCoy plans to continue ramping up his program so that the Forest Service can eventually restore and maintain LBL's oak woodlands and savannas at ecologically relevant scales. Crews treated 3,200 acres with prescribed fire this year, and hope to burn at least 5,000 acres next year. They are also proposing mechanical thinning treatments across approximately 2,600 acres (see call-out box).

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://tncfire.org/usfln>
- Join and contribute to the FLN listserv
http://tncfire.org/training_listservs
- Contact TNC or agency leads:
Lynn Decker, The Nature Conservancy Fire Initiative ldecker@tnc.org; 801-320-0524
Roy Johnson, Dept. of the Interior
roy_johnson@nifc.blm.gov; 208-387-5163
Sarah Robertson, US Forest Service
sarahrobertson@fs.fed.us; 208-387-5222