

September 2005

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://tncfire.org/usfln>

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY FIRE INITIATIVE This 17-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>

Across the northeastern U.S. The Nature Conservancy is working with partners to restore a number of fire-adapted ecosystems. Early on, fire managers in these states recognized the benefits of sharing resources, including dissemination of improved techniques and other information, increased capacity to burn “at scale” and better use of narrow burn windows.

In southern Maine, the Conservancy is using prescribed fire to maintain ecosystems at Waterboro and Hollis Pine Barrens and at Kennebunk Plains. Totalling more than 3,600 acres, these areas contain sandplain grassland, a range of pitch pine-scrub oak communities, and pitch pine heath barrens, all of which serve as habitat for a host of rare plants and animals. Prescribed fire is also reducing hazardous fuels and decreasing the chances of uncontrolled wildfire—a real threat to both human and natural communities in this densely populated part of the state.



Stewardship Ecologist Mike Auger (pictured here at Waterboro Barrens Preserve in Maine) was a member of a crew that helped conduct prescribed burning across the Northeast.

—Photo by Ginger Hagan,
Dutchess County Land Conservancy

SOUTHERN MAINE FIRE PROGRAM — MAJOR PARTNERS

- Albany Pine Bush Commission
- Audubon Society (Maine and Massachusetts Chapters)
- Maine Forest Service
- Nantucket Conservation Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of Massachusetts
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Army National Guard
- Eight local volunteer fire depts.
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- National Park Service
- The Trustees of Reservations
- University of New Hampshire
- US Forest Service

For more information about the Conservancy’s work in southern Maine, please contact Nancy Sferra (nsferra@tnc.org) or Parker Schuerman (pschuerman@tnc.org).

As part of this effort, Parker Schuerman, The Nature Conservancy’s Southern Maine Preserves Manager and an active member of the **Northeast Regional FLN**, is doing his part to develop and transfer prescribed fire technology, skills and experience across the Northeast. Each year Schuerman recruits and trains 4–5 seasonal workers who are responsible for prepping management units and conducting burns as well as performing pre- and post-burn monitoring. Crews typically consist of individuals who want to learn first-hand about fire ecology and ecological fire management.

Schuerman often takes his crew and his Type 6 Engine (a truck equipped with a slip-on water tank, pumps and hoses) to work at other FLN project sites. In a typical year the Maine crew, all of whom meet National Wildfire Coordinating Group standards, participate in 8–10 burns in both Massachusetts and New York. The additional equipment and trained personnel are essential for helping maintain or restore ecosystems at project sites that in some cases have

limited or even no capacity to burn on their own. Sometimes the Maine fire crew also trains with other Nature Conservancy fire professionals in Massachusetts and New York, and fire crews from these states also regularly travel to Maine to assist with burns.

Each exchange represents a valuable learning opportunity. Moreover, this type of collaboration has been essential in fostering partnerships and helping newer regional FLN project sites build their own successful fire programs.

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
Anne Jeffery, Dept. of the Interior anne_jeffery@nifc.blm.gov; 208-387-5458
Sarah Robertson, US Forest Service sarahrobertson@fs.fed.us; 208-387-5222



The Nature Conservancy
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH