

# TNC Southern Blue Ridge Fire Crew



## What is an “As Needed” Fire Crew?

Controlled burning in the Southern Blue Ridge is characterized by sporadic burn windows dependent on weather and available numbers of firefighters. Thus, we recognized a need for a relatively large fire crew that could provide assistance to SBRFLN partners on short notice, while staying cost effective by not staffing during non-burn times, possibly for weeks to months throughout the burn season.

**The Nature Conservancy –North Carolina established the Southern Blue Ridge Fire Crew in 2015.** Based out of Asheville, NC, the crew is activated “as needed” November through May, traveling within the SBRFLN to assist partners with prescribed fire and related projects.

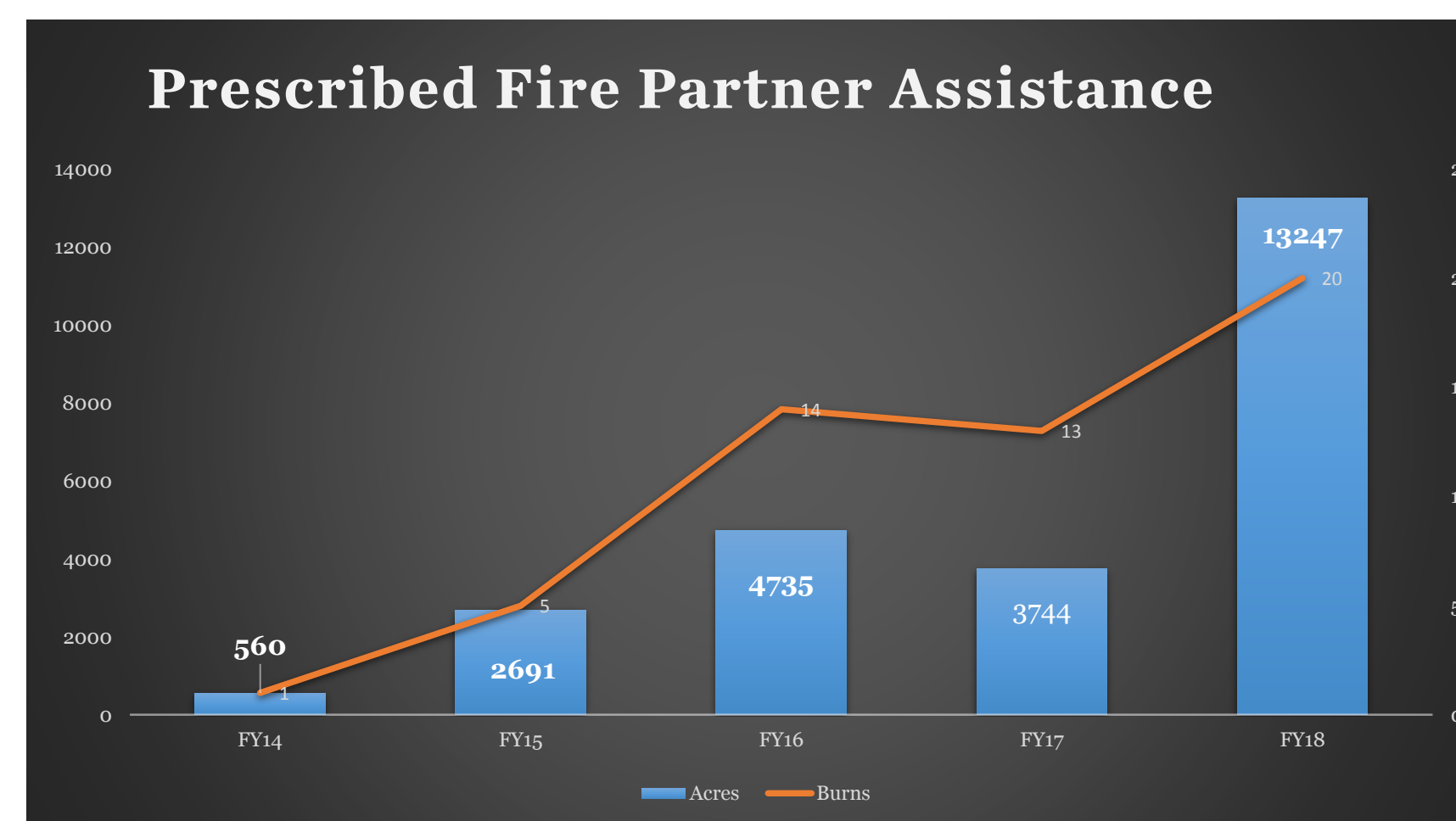


This model has allowed us to hire structural firefighters, paramedics, as well as retired and off-season firefighters from the western US that have significant experience, but are not able to commit to a full-time job. **The result is a 20-person fire crew that loves to burn, including eight EMTs (6 basic, 2 advanced), one Type 2 Burn Boss, multiple qualified and trainee single resource bosses, and a Type 2 Line Safety Officer.** This also provides much needed wildland fire experience for structure firefighters that frequently are the first to respond to woods fires.



## Our Work

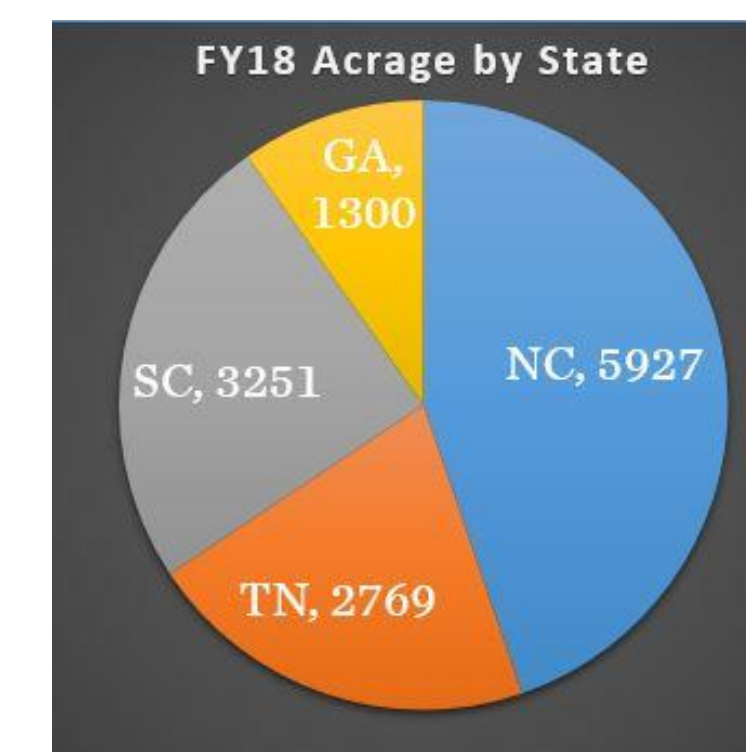
**With over 120 years of combined fire experience,** the crew conducts complex firing and holding assignments as well as baseline forest inventory for USFS Forest Restoration Projects.



The crew also partners with Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition to lead workdays in some of the most high-risk wildland urban interface communities, demonstrating the creation of defensible spaces and home hardening to help communities become more fire adapted.



Through the 2018 spring prescribed fire season, the crew has supported the efforts of seven partners to complete 53 controlled burns on over 32,000 acres.



## What Folks are Saying

“The TNC crew was great to work with. They have a good understanding of fire behavior in our local fuel models. The crew can mesh into our organization fairly seamlessly. All personnel were friendly and very easy to work with.”

**Ben Ingram, Fire Management Officer| Cherokee National Forest –Unaka Ranger District**

“The Nature Conservancy’s prescribed fire crew has been an invaluable tool over the last two years for the NC Forest Service in District 9. We have been able to conduct more prescribed burns with their help. There are times when there are more TNC employees on a burn than NCFS employees. They never say no, unless otherwise committed, and they always show up with a smile and ready to work hard.”

**Tim Howell, District Forester, District 9| North Carolina Forest Service**

“The TNC crew was very helpful in firing and holding two system roads on the burn. They followed instructions, stayed in contact with other resources and fit right in with the rest of the burn organization. They stayed flexible and rolled with the changes thrown at them. And they were entirely self-sufficient, which is always a plus.”

**Greg Philipp, Fire Management Officer| Pisgah National Forest –Grandfather Ranger District**

“The TNC Fire Crew has proven to be critical for holding fire lines, attack of spotovers, securing base lines, and strategic interior ignitions. All crew members were highly competent, knowledgeable, positive in thinking, willing to work hard, and willing to do all requested tasks.”

**Ryan Jacobs, Mountains Wildlife Forester| North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission**

“TNC’s Mountain Crew has proven to be a reliable, punctual, and skilled partner in helping the Appalachian-Piedmont Zone meet fuels treatment objectives. Effective leadership, skilled and experienced crew-members, and their desire to further interagency relationships keep them at the top of our out-of-park resource list.”

**Shane Paxton, Assistant Fire Management Officer| Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

“The handlines you guys/gals have put in were well above specs and done in a timely manner. On the Russell Mountain I was impressed with the crew fitting in well with our organization and firing/holding a critical piece of line that needed careful attention. Thanks again for your work here and look forward to you guys helping us in the future.”

**Wes Bentley, Fire Management Officer| Sumter National Forest – Andrew Pickens District**

We would like to thank all current and previous members of the crew for their hard work and dedication, as well as our partners in the FLN, Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition, and USFS. The USFS Southern Region has been the primary contributor of funding.

Poster assembled by Grace McLeod.

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