

# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

**Adam Warwick, Stewardship Manager**

**The Nature Conservancy-North Carolina**

**Southern Blue Ridge Program**

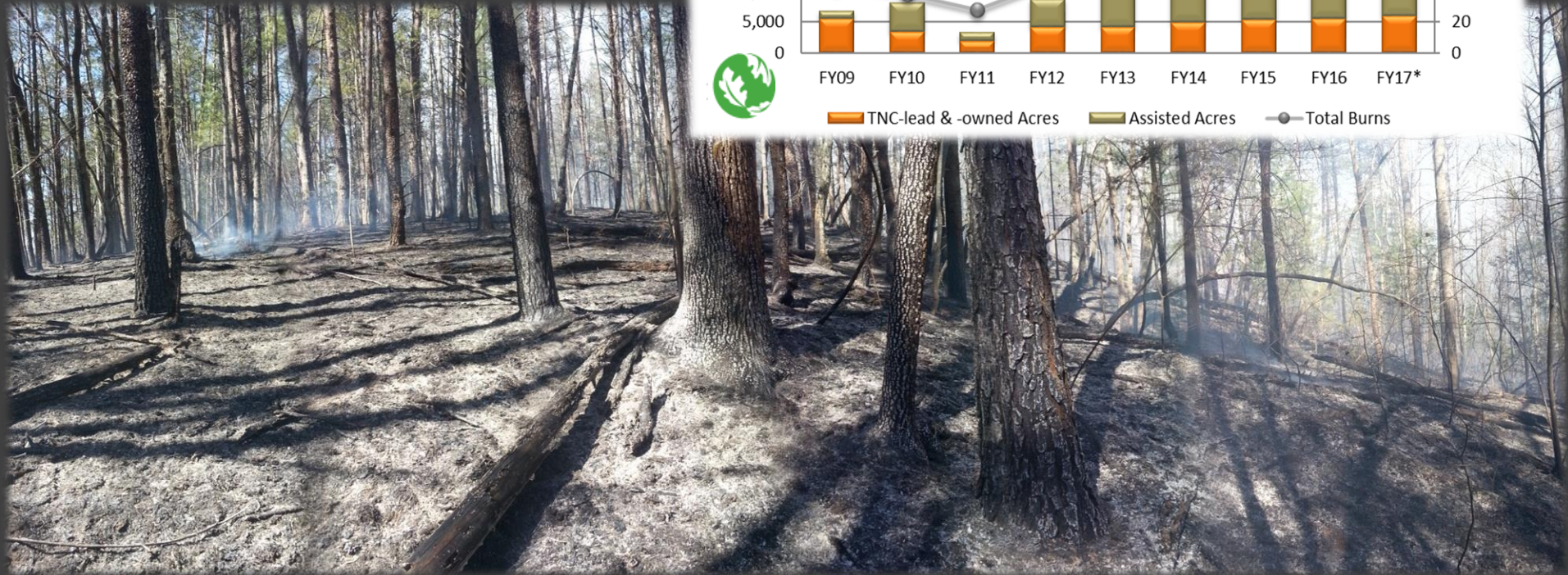
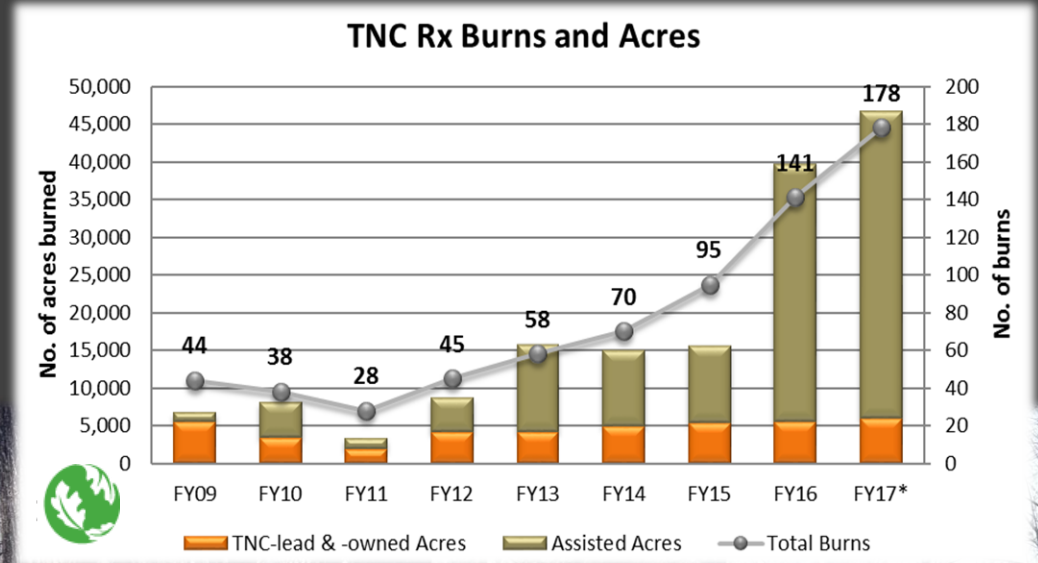
**Asheville, NC**

**[awarwick@tnc.org](mailto:awarwick@tnc.org)**





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew





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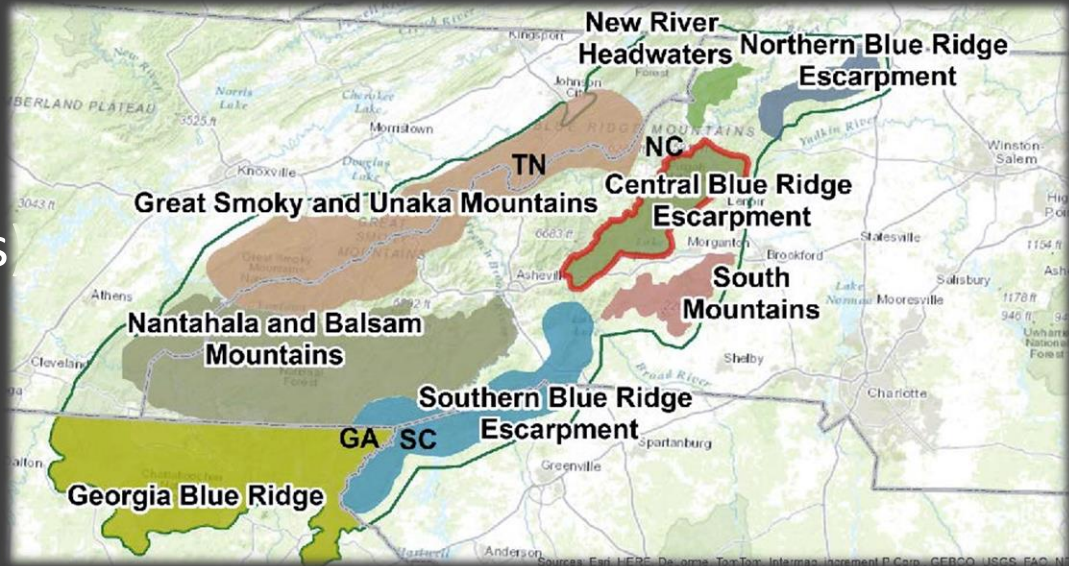
## Barrier

“Good Year” (15-20 burn days  
November - March  
weather smoke WUI  
topography weekends fuel  
moisture

## Mitigation

Crews need to be available  
*when needed* but not  
necessarily full time.

WNC crew can burn when  
needed with our Southern Blue  
Ridge Fire Learning Network  
partners, addressing a barrier  
to burning more acres.



Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network



# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

Pilot Year 1 (2015-2016 Fire Season)  
November – April

- 43 applicants, 12 hired
  - 150 years of combined fire experience
- Four different partners assisted on seven burns within four FLN landscapes for **4,731 acres**
- Partnership Building: particularly NC Wildlife Resource Commission, NC State Parks and US Forest Service-Grandfather
  - Not make or break
- Utilized crew to collect timber data on an important USFS restoration project
- Finished with 6 crew members at end of 6-month season.



Adam Warwick





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

## Lessons Learned

- Hiring
  - **Recruiting:** Most of the folks we hire are not searching TNC website for jobs.
    - Those that do search TNC website for jobs may not be best fit. #local
  - Requires some hires to have experience; teachers - mentors
  - More emphasis on scrutinizing FFT availability
- Logistics
  - Infrastructure-equipment
- Crew Coordinator
- Establishing TNC-Mountains track record



Adam Warwick





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

Year 2 (2016-2017 Fire Season)  
December – May

## Changes

- Hired a crew coordinator
- Increased crew size to 15
- Scrutinized availability
- Avenza Maps for unfamiliar terrain



Adam Warwick



Corey Presnell





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

Year 2 (2016-2017 Fire Season)  
December – May

- 50 applicants
  - 15 hired (>150 years of fire experience)
  - Finished with 14 + Volunteers
- Six different partners assisted on seven burns within four FLN landscapes for **3,618** acres burned (TN and NC)
- NC Forest Service, USFS-Grandfather and Nantahala, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NC State Parks, NPS-Great Smoky Mountains NP



Warren Bielenberg





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

2-day burn at Cades  
Cove



Adam Warwick



Adam Warwick

# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

Eller Seep



Adam Warwick



Bruce Roberts



# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

## Who we have hired

- NC Forest Service Pick Up Firefighter (7)
- VFD Firefighters (5)
- Non-Fire Careers (6)
- Asheville Fire Department (3)
- NC Forest Service Retired (1)
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission Retired (1)
- Off-Season Federal Firefighter (1)
- College Student (1)



Dean Simon



Warren Bieberg



Adam Warwick





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

## Who we hire

- NC Forest Service Pick Up Firefighter
- VFD Firefighters
- Non-Fire Careers
- Asheville Fire Department
- NC Forest Service Retired
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission Retired
- Off-Season Federal Firefighter
- College Student
- **FOLKS THAT LOVE FIRE (15)**



Dean Simon



Warren Bielenberg





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

## What we do:

- Ignition
  - Holding
  - Engine
  - UTV
  - EMT
  - Fire Effects Monitoring
  - Fireline Construction
  - WUI Workdays
- 
- FAL2 FALB
  - ENGB FIRB
  - EMT LSOF2 (Line Safety Officer)
  - RXB2(t) and RXB1-2 equivalent



Warren Bielenberg



Jen Lamb



Adam Warwick



Corey Presnell



Warren Bielenberg





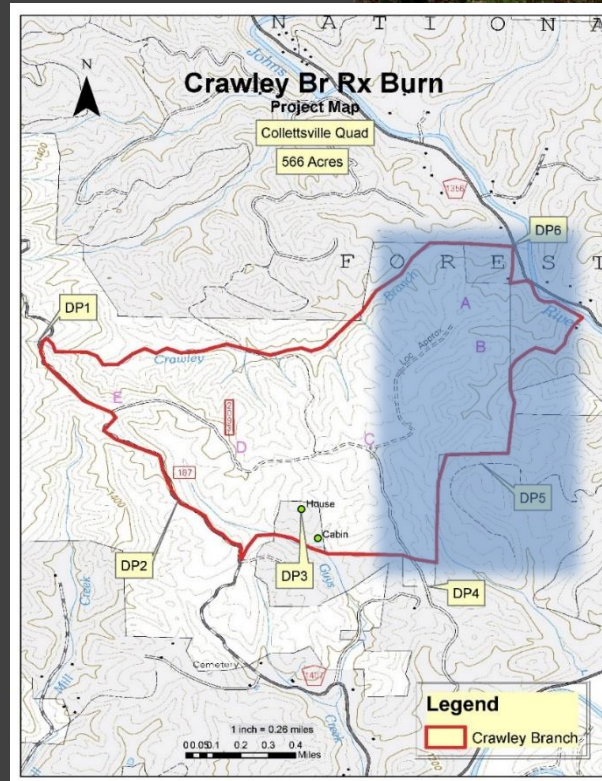
# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

## What we do:

- Ignition (FIRB)
  - Holding (ENGB)
  - Engine (ENGB)
  - UTV
  - EMT
  - Fire Effects Monitoring
  - Fireline Construction
  - WUI Workdays
- 
- Crawley Branch



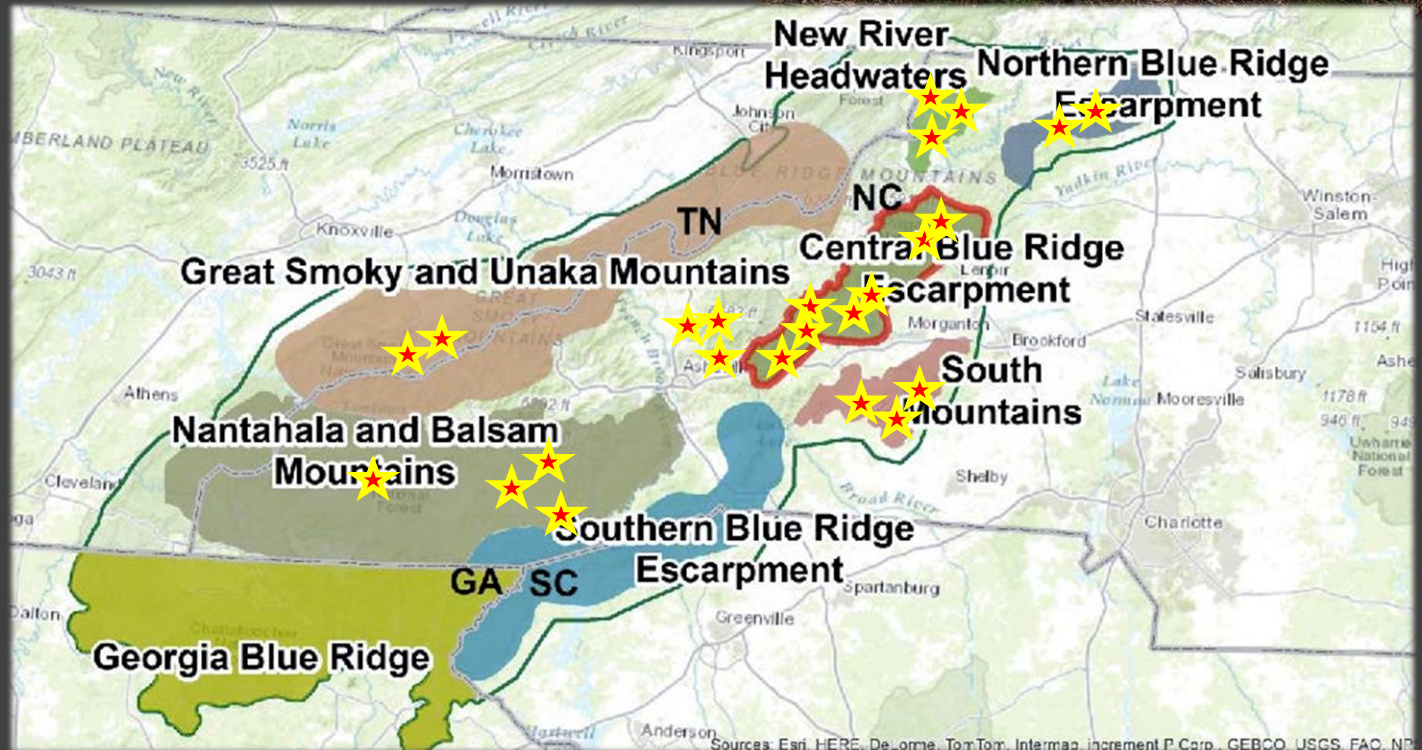
Adam Warwick





# Western North Carolina Fire Crew

## Where we go







Adam Warwick

[awarwick@tnc.org](mailto:awarwick@tnc.org)



Adam Warwick



Jen Lamb





END



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

*Year 2 (2016-2017 Fire Season)*

## *Qualifications*

- *FFT2(15)*
- *Line Safety Officer 2 (1)*
- *EMT (4)*
- *RXB1 RXB2-equiv (1)*





# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

*Year 2 (2016-2017 Fire Season)*

- *Example of Work*
  - *Crawley Branch USFS*





# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

*Year 2 (2016-2017 Fire Season)*

- *Example of Work*
  - *Crawley Branch USFS*



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

*TNC's As-Needed crew was **critical for holding fire lines, attacking spotovers**, shoring base lines, and strategic **interior ignitions** on the Huckleberry Mountain controlled burn. The crew was highly valuable and beneficial for implementing strategic burn objectives. Having the TNC crew provided **additional support and resources to control problem areas** and increase burn efficiency and made containment and implementation easier.*

*Ryan Jacobs  
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission*





# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

*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. They were entirely **self-sufficient**, which is always a plus.*

*Greg Philipp  
FMO-USFS Pisgah National Forest Grandfather RD*



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

*END*





# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew



## Conservancy forest crew fired up for winter burn season

Staff reports 4:50 p.m. EST December 12, 2015



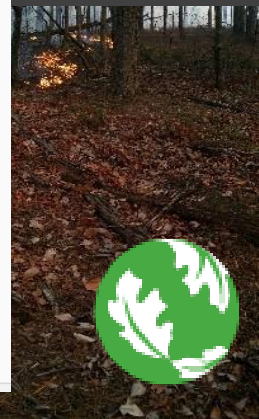
(Photo: Jim Keeper/Courtesy of NC Wildlife Resources Commission)

ASHEVILLE - The Nature Conservancy's new fire crew is preparing for the winter months, when most controlled burns occur.

"This is an amazing crew," said the Conservancy's Adam Warwick, who leads the organization's forest restoration work in North Carolina's mountains. "We can lend their expertise to public land owners in the Southern Blue Ridge, which should enable forest restoration on a bigger scale than in past years."

The crew has one successful burn under its belt, but that's just the beginning, according to the Conservancy. The crew is ready to manage controlled burns on Conservancy property as well as public lands.

The Conservancy crew, which was funded by a grant from Asheville's Beattie Foundation, includes several veteran firefighters with decades of experience. It also includes people who work in local mountain fire departments and as standby firefighters for the North Carolina Forest Service. Together, the crew has 156 years of



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

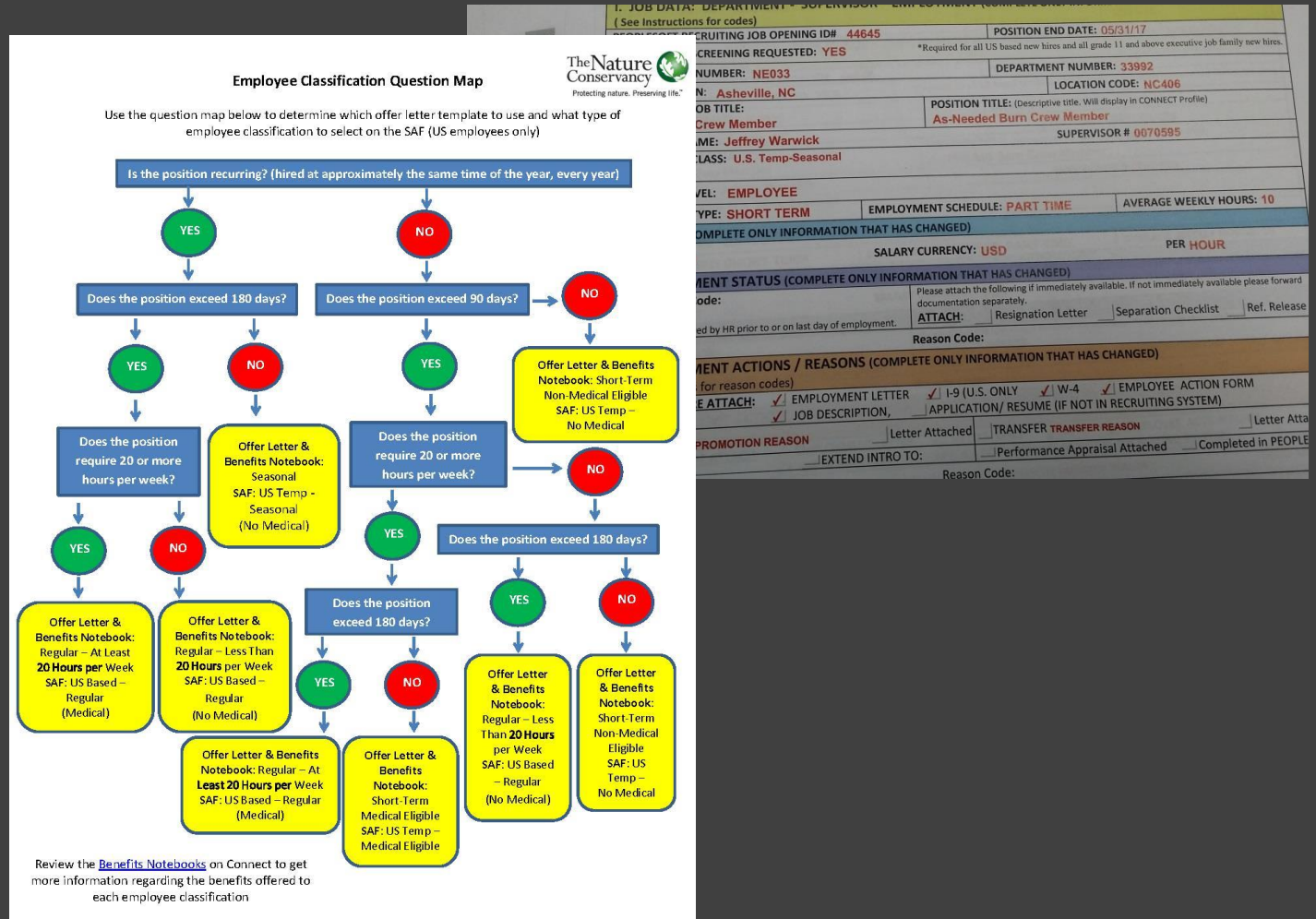


# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

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# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

## **Cost Breakdown:**

*\$12,385 Cost of crew*

*\$7,610 salary (\$14/hour)*

*\$3,275 in direct costs - EBA (32%)/Benefits (13%)*

*\$500 in background screenings*

*\$1000 Swag (hoodies, hats, t-shirts, helmet stickers, lighter leashes)*

*Includes 2 days onboarding, and some burning time supported by CFLR monies*

*\$15,000 start up costs*

*10 radios, line gear, shelters,*





# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

Short-Term Part Time: <6 months (i.e., seasonal) <35 hrs/week

Short-Term Full Time: <6 months 35 hrs/week (e.g., Sandhills crew)

Long-Term Temporary (Full or Part-Time): <1 year

Long-Term Permanent (Full or Part-Time): >6 months

I. JOB DATA: DEPARTMENT: SUPERVISOR: EMPLOYMENT (Complete only)			
(See Instructions for codes)			
PEOPLESFT RECRUITING JOB OPENING ID# 44645		POSITION END DATE: 05/31/17	
BACKGROUND SCREENING REQUESTED: YES		*Required for all US based new hires and all grade 11 and above executive job family new hires.	
BUSINESS UNIT NUMBER: NE033		DEPARTMENT NUMBER: 33992	
WORK LOCATION: Asheville, NC		LOCATION CODE: NC406	
JOB NUMBER/ JOB TITLE: 450006/Burn Crew Member		POSITION TITLE: (Descriptive title. Will display in CONNECT Profile) As-Needed Burn Crew Member	
SUPERVISOR NAME: Jeffrey Warwick		SUPERVISOR # 0070595	
EMPLOYMENT CLASS: U.S. Temp-Seasonal			
Explain Other:			
SUPERVISOR LEVEL: EMPLOYEE			
EMPLOYMENT TYPE: SHORT TERM		EMPLOYMENT SCHEDULE: PART TIME	AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS: 10
II. SALARY (COMPLETE ONLY INFORMATION THAT HAS CHANGED)			
SALARY: 13.90		SALARY CURRENCY: USD	PER HOUR
III. EMPLOYMENT STATUS (COMPLETE ONLY INFORMATION THAT HAS CHANGED)			
Term. Reason Code:		Please attach the following if immediately available. If not immediately available please forward documentation separately.	
SAF should be received by HR prior to or on last day of employment.		ATTACH: Resignation Letter	Separation Checklist Ref. Release
Reason Code:			
Leave Status:			
IV. EMPLOYMENT ACTIONS / REASONS (COMPLETE ONLY INFORMATION THAT HAS CHANGED)			
(See Instructions for reason codes)			
FOR HIRE/REHIRE ATTACH:		EMPLOYMENT LETTER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I-9 (U.S. ONLY) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W-4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EMPLOYEE ACTION FORM	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JOB DESCRIPTION,		APPLICATION/ RESUME (IF NOT IN RECRUITING SYSTEM)	
<input type="checkbox"/> PROMOTION PROMOTION REASON		<input type="checkbox"/> Letter Attached	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSFER TRANSFER REASON
<input type="checkbox"/> END INTRO		<input type="checkbox"/> EXTEND INTRO TO:	<input type="checkbox"/> Performance Appraisal Attached <input type="checkbox"/> Completed in PEOPLE
Reason Code:			

# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

PAGE 40 | SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2016 | ASHEVILLE CITIZEN-TIMES

THE SUNDAY FRAME

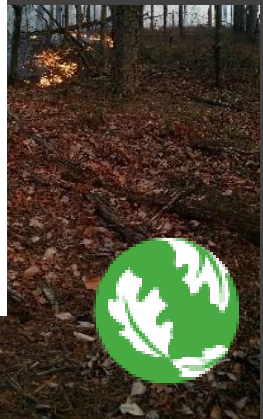
Regardless, I think this gets at the core of our science philosophy and what we do and we should expend the effort necessary to choose the right path.

**BURNING FOR A HEALTHIER ECOSYSTEM**

Fire is a natural part of the forest ecosystem, and it's been a long time since we've had a fire in the Western North Carolina mountains. But now, as the climate warms, fire is becoming a more frequent and intense part of the landscape. The Asheville Citizen-Times reports that the Western North Carolina region is experiencing a significant increase in fire activity, with fires burning more frequently and more intensely than in the past. This is due to a combination of factors, including drier conditions, warmer temperatures, and a longer fire season. The article discusses the impact of these fires on the forest ecosystem and the need for a more proactive fire management strategy. It highlights the work of the Asheville Citizen-Times and the Western North Carolina region in addressing this issue.

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# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

## Challenges (Year 1)

- *Unexpectedly high attrition (6 of 12; health, family, new jobs)*
- *Building crew cohesion (i.e., safety, communication)*
- *TNC-NC Funded (\$30K)*
- *Volume of hiring paperwork (12x),*
  - *Support from HR and other staff is important (J. Lamb)*



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

## Challenges (Year 1)

- *Outreach: FFTs don't generally check TNC website for jobs.*
- *Not generally prospective -ologists*
  - *Required active targeted outreach to NC Forest Service, VFDs, Asheville FD.*
  - *Door-Door; Word of mouth, some folks not ready to put down the torch*
- *Logistics and coordination (Storage-Hand Tools, Meeting Place)*
- *Used TNC vehicles and when necessary, a personal vehicle or two*
  - *Renting was just another challenging coordination effort*





# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

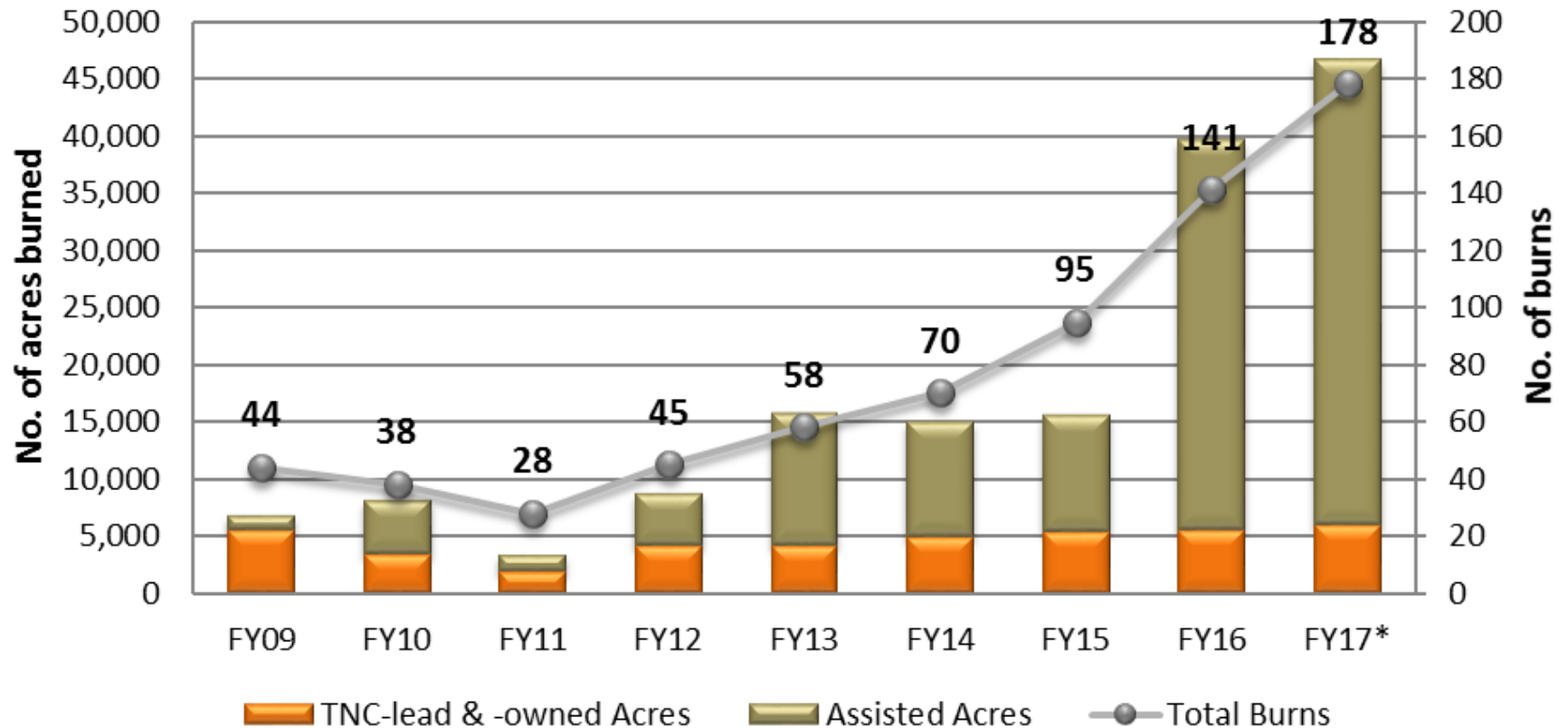
## Successes (Year 1)

- *Got off to a great start with the boots on the ground presence*
- *Partnership Building*
  - *USFS partnership*
  - *Building the NC Forest Service partnership*
  - *Building the NC WRC Partnership*
  - *Building the NC State Parks capacity*



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

## TNC Rx Burns and Acres





# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

## Year 2 (2016-17):

- 4 returnees from 2015-16 (big advantage for as-needed militia)
- Hired 15 (12 in 2015-16) to account for attrition and folks that were not as available as anticipated (DONE)
- Hired a crew coordinator to take on more of the logistics and coordination (DONE)
- Budgeted for some personal mileage reimbursement in case TNC vehicles do not meet the needs (DONE)
- USFS R8 funding (\$40K).
- A good burn day for one is a good burn day for all. Split crews



# Western North Carolina As-Needed Fire Crew

## *Results and Changes for Year 2:*

- *More scrutiny for hires other commitments, etc. (i.e., they want to burn, but are they gonna be available as much as they think they are?)*
- *Managing higher experienced (20-30yrs) folks, managing personalities*
  - *Different from managing 20-25 yo FFT2s.*
- *IQCS – IQS Quals Equivalency (DIVS, SOF2, RXB2, etc.)*

