

# SCIENCE DELIVERY IS A TWO-WAY STREET – DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSORTIUM OF APPALACHIAN FIRE MANAGERS AND SCIENTISTS (CAFMS)

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## BACKGROUND

The Appalachian region stretches along the Blue Ridge Mountains from Pennsylvania south into Georgia and Alabama. The region's lands shelter some of the greatest biological diversity in the United States. The heavily forested public lands are in great need of science-based fire management after decades of fire suppression. Fire-related research is relatively new to the region; fire managers often have to rely on knowledge and techniques developed for other, less biologically diverse regions. Though two fire learning networks (FLNs) have developed in the region over the last few years and fire research has been established, a disconnect remains between managers and scientists. Outside of the FLNs, there are few if any ways for managers to convey to researchers the questions they have about the conditions they encounter on the ground.

## OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of CAFMS is to form a widening network of fire managers and scientists to facilitate knowledge exchange and interaction among managers and scientists. This includes communicating what is known about natural fire and managing with prescribed burning in the Appalachian region, demonstrating techniques and results, and identifying remaining and emerging research questions.

## CAFMS DEVELOPMENT AND RESULTS

With funding from the Joint Fire Science Program, a series of three independent meetings of fire managers and scientists was held throughout the Appalachian region in the autumn of 2009. At each meeting, participants were divided into breakout groups and asked how they received information about fire research and what the most

effective means of science delivery are. Comments and suggestions were informative but not always predictable. Most participants noted that many fire resources existed, but they were disconnected and difficult to find. Managers across the region were largely unaware of science delivery tools such as Compass, the Fire Science Encyclopedia, and the Tall Timbers Fire Ecology database. They did not like to read scientific articles and particularly disliked metric measurements. Many liked to attend local or regional conferences and used proceedings as a major source of information. Large national or international conferences were perceived as being for researchers only and were not attended by managers. Intimidation of researchers is a problem that can be reduced by face-to-face contact. Lack of rewards for researchers to become involved in science delivery is a problem that needs to be addressed.

The Fire Learning Network is strong in the Eastern United States, especially in the Southern Appalachians. Individual efforts of scientists in the Northern Research Station have greatly improved scientist/manager communications, but there is no structure (i.e., events or organizations) to ensure continued success. One-on-one interaction is the best means of science delivery but the most costly. There is no single best method to provide science delivery because each individual receives and digests information differently.

Dozens of suggestions were given at each meeting for improving science delivery, but some were common among all meetings and breakout groups. Common suggestions are listed below in order of preference. Some of these resources are already available and the others will be provided by CAFMS within the next few years.

“One-stop shopping” Web site, including:

- CAFMS newsletter
- List of fire publications
- Links to Fire Science Encyclopedia and other resources
- Fact sheets

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List-serve for management questions with scientist input

Maps to management or research burns with podcasts and/or geo-caching of information

Summary of management burns in a database with standardized protocols

Widgets

Synthesis of research results for the Appalachian region – possible titles:

Impacts of fire on flora in the Appalachian region

Impacts of fire on fauna in the Appalachian region

Impacts of fire on atmospheric quality in the

Appalachian region

Impacts of fire on soil and water in the Appalachian

region

Face-to-face networking, including:

Field trips with managers and researchers

Small group meetings

Week-long road trip

## MEMBERSHIP

CAFMS is for all land managers and researchers in the region who deal with any aspect of fire. The backbone of the consortium is a partnership among the fire managers involved in the two Appalachian region FLNs and scientists from the U.S. Forest Service Southern and Northern Research Stations and partner universities in the region. Other partners include additional Federal agencies (National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), nongovernmental organizations (The Nature Conservancy, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and others), and State natural resource and other departments. Becoming a member is as simple as signing up. Visit our website at [cafms.org](http://cafms.org) or email Helen Mohr ([helen@cafms.org](mailto:helen@cafms.org)) or Tom Waldrop ([tom@cafms.org](mailto:tom@cafms.org)).