

Summary – PyroLife Stakeholder Engagement workshop – May 2021

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In the PyroLife Stakeholder Engagement workshop, an array of experts and stakeholders presented on diverse aspects of fire management and geography: from societal engagement, emergency response, conservation and land management, co-production with stakeholders, to sustainable land management. Presented challenges and questions are summarized in the figure to the right:



From these topics and ensuing discussions, Group 2 distilled a challenge at hand into the overarching question: **How can stakeholder engagement in fire research maintain continuity and engage with different sectors under changing conditions?**

Context and Discussion

There is a shortsightedness when it comes to hazard preparedness and mitigation: fires and fire landscapes are to be actively tended to, rather than acted upon once and then forgotten until disaster strikes. This requires joint, coordinated actions by all stakeholders, such as scientists, institutions at all levels, and publics. Moving beyond one-time, uni-directional ‘stakeholder engagement’, true **engagement** and **support** requires building a relationship of **trust** between stakeholders. As such, a **continuous engagement** is necessary, not only time-wise, but also by establishing connection and situatedness in the landscape, as stakeholders’ social, ecological and economic conditions change over the time, including where they are in the fire management cycle and level of experience with (wild)fires. Finally, engagement through **open dialogue** between all stakeholders - whereby perspectives, experiences and knowledge are recognized, exchanged and learnt from - help to **bridge the gaps** that commonly occur in the fire world (between e.g. technological development and implementation at the institutional level, or science, practitioners and local communities).

Options and recommendations

Given the identified challenges we suggest condensing stakeholder engagement into an annual event with a key aim to provide a **positive experience of fire**. Such “*Fire Field Days*” would be repeated over the long term, **accessible to all fire stakeholders**; **interactive knowledge dissemination** (practical, visual, demonstrations; e.g. experimental burning of different fuels, artistic works, local food, and performances); **facilitated exchange** in the natural landscape to provide a politically neutral setting and a platform of exchange for diverse stakeholders to agree on common ground and differences in opinion; **collaborative learning** (e.g. prescribed burning workshops); and the option to take home **physical products** (e.g. physical/virtual maps that indicate areas with fire management activities; calendars with further information on diverse aspects of fires throughout the year). These physical products provide a common objective for participants to elaborate, and provide a tool to extend the efforts after the single event.

To **evaluate and provide evidence** on this approach’s success in the long-term, specific metrics will be agreed on and evaluated yearly, like land area treated with fire management interventions, number of mitigation actions, number of people reached, yearly feedback on policies, number and usage of outputs created.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Fire Field Days present an opportunity for continuous stakeholder engagement (rather than a top-down informative approach) through repeated annual activities, building strong networks between public-private partnerships and research, and establishing connections to local landscapes while encouraging (inter)national cooperation. Fire Field Days can create a context that is both **relevant** for research and appealing for local people, helping form **long lasting partnerships**. Through such a network and ensuing events, we can move away from single “silver bullet” solutions and help develop a **toolbox** that can be applied in diverse ways in different territories.