



Hiring a Full-Time Coordinator: Expanding our reach



Key fire science topics:

Fuels Management, Watershed Processes, Soil, Invasive Plant Species, Vegetation, Postfire recovery and management, Fire regimes, Indigenous knowledge

Impact Categories:

Connectivity, Capacity Building, Social

Annual Report FY 2025

Story Summary:

Recognizing the need for deeper investment in wildfire resilience, the Pacific Fire Exchange expanded our capacity by hiring a full-time coordinator in December 2024. This support from the Joint Fire Science Program marks a significant step in aligning resources with the Pacific region's growing wildfire risk and enabling the development of additional in-depth, science-based products and partnerships. Following the devastating 2023 Maui fires, there has been a statewide call to raise the level of commitment, coordination, and investment in wildfire mitigation. PFX, through hiring a full time coordinator, and its partners are meeting that call – dedicating full-time expertise to wildfire outreach, research translation, and communication. Our coordinator, Sara Gabrielson PhD, brings a doctorate in natural resources and conservation in Hawai'i and a particular interest in the intersection of research and practice having bridged these worlds intentionally through training and work experience in environmental education, habitat restoration, environmentally centered consulting, and science communication. Within the last year she has pursued ambitious, high-impact projects, presented at scientific conferences, and continued bridging research and on-the-ground wildfire management.

The Pacific Fire Exchange (PFX) is a program funded by the Joint Fire Science Program and jointly managed by Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. PFX aims to improve fire outcomes in Hawai'i and the Western Pacific by pursuing, translating, and sharing fire science and research with those who are dealing with wildfire.

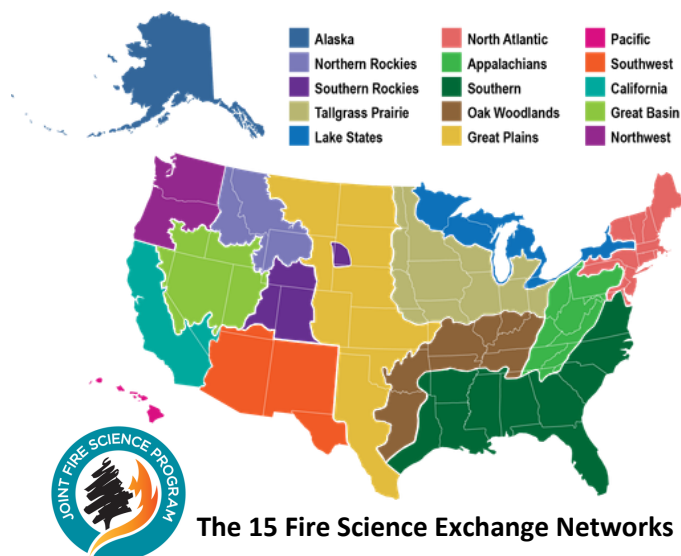


Impacts

- **Investment aligned with risk:** This position expansion to full time reflects a statewide shift toward investing in wildfire mitigation at a level matching Hawai'i's true risk, which helped attract highly qualified applicants.
- **High-caliber leadership:** The new coordinator brings a PhD in natural resources and experience in Hawai'i-based conservation, invasive species management, and science communication.
- **Expanded program capacity:** Hiring a full-time coordinator expanded PFX's ability to lead complex projects, collaborate with partners, and respond to the urgent demand for wildfire information in our region.
- **In-depth product development:** With full-time capacity, PFX advanced two major projects set for release in late 2025:
 - A **Fire-Resilient Landscape Guide for Lāhainā & West Maui**, co-designed with the Surfrider Foundation, providing practical, illustrated planting guidance for homeowners. Responding to community requests for residential vegetation management that mitigates wildfire risk. Local subject matter expert (researchers, botanists, horticulturists) input to develop guide.
 - A **Gulch Management Research and Fact Sheet Suite**, summarizing interviews with land managers across the islands to share strategies for mitigating wildfire risk in Hawai'i's challenging gulch landscapes. Product suite includes fact sheet, webpage with additional links and resources, full technical report, and webinar with technical experts and land managers and a Q&A.
- **Strengthened regional leadership:** The expanded capacity that full-time leadership provides positions PFX as a central connector for science-based wildfire solutions across Hawai'i and the Pacific.



Full-time Pacific Fire Exchange Coordinator, Sara Gabrielson (center), after delivering talk at a disaster recovery symposium during the Hawai'i Conservation Conference, Honolulu, July 2025.



More information about PFX Resources:

For recent resources check out the PFX Resources page! Explore the website for more events and information about the unique region that we serve!

