

August 13th MO Prescribed Fire Council

Virtual ZOOM meeting hosting by Ryan Gauger of TNC 6pm-8:00pm

Chair Jef Hodges called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. that started with a round of introductions. All Executive Committee Members were in attendance (Vice Chair Wes Buchheit, Secretary/Treasurer John Burk, Members At Large Robin Verble, Neal Humke, and Scot Mikols). 14 other individuals also participated (contact list attached).

The second order of business was to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. No changes were recommended and a motion was made to accept the minutes by Robin Verble and seconded by Wes Buchheit.

Website Lisa McBryer with QF/PF was given permission and funding by the council at the February meeting to improve the MPFC website. Lisa worked with Wes and Courtney Nicks to complete the improvements which included a “log prescribed burns” feature to help track acreage being burned in Missouri. The new site was launched in April and within the first two weeks, 50 burns were logged onto the site. There are currently 1,300 subscribers to the site. Lisa also did 3 newsletters in an effort to market MPFC’s efforts. Lisa also mentioned to the group to be sure to send her notifications of upcoming events that can be posted to the site. Ben Webster also mentioned that the “log your burn” tool would be referenced in all future MDC workshops and trainings.

Legislation Ryan mentioned that we lost the House sponsor of the prescribed burn bill and would have to identify another before proceeding in the next session. Ryan also mentioned that Holly requested the council to decide how to proceed with the bill regarding the level or designation of negligence (gross or simple) or a tiered approach based upon training and experience. The challenge is that gross negligence would be preferred by practitioners but would be a lot more difficult to pass and simple may result in a situation where liability concerns are worsened. Ben stated that we needed to identify a sponsor first. It was recommended by Robin that Representative Don Mayhew may be a possible sponsor, Zack Coy suggested Bruce Sassmann, John Burk recommended that we seek advice from Aaron Jeffries. Although the decision upon what level of negligence to pursue in the bill was tabled it was mentioned that Holly recommended that, within the next few weeks, we should approach the Cattlemen’s Association to determine how we planned to proceed.

Grant Money Ben reported that \$1,400 was provided to the Osage Plains PBA for equipment. He also reported that he filed an extension but that it would expire in June of 2021 so we needed to use that funding or it will go away. John reported that only one PBA member that attended the fall training applied for travel reimbursement. Although the NWTF money does not have an expiration date, to date, with the exception of the one travel reimbursement, the only other use has been MPFC business related expenses (room rental, website maintenance and development, food for annual meetings, etc.)

Training Burn workshops are being planned but nothing is currently scheduled. Ben offered to do another training similar to the one last fall. Most thought that with COVID-19 a fall in person training was probably a bit ambitious and recommended putting it off until the spring. Ryan recommended that we work on designing training programs now and offered to help with this process. Wes recommended assigned a committee but Ben thought that the Executive Committee and those serving in advisory roles was already a small enough group to be effective. Ryan agreed to be the lead on getting things started. Wes requested that Ben send him updates on when various trainings became available.

State Fire Plan Scot and Wes provided an outline that was shared prior to the meeting. The plan was discussed and is to function more or less as a work plan for a new position that QF/PF secured. Casey mentioned that he was waiting for word on a NFWF grant that he applied for. He has already secured enough partner funding to hire a Fire Coordinator position but that, if the NFWF funding comes through he would be able to sweeten the pot with additional positions that could function as a habitat team. He expects to hear something on the grant before the end of the month and hopes to

post the Coordinator position within the next 2 months. The position would help with the business of the council and the development of PBA's as primary duties. The idea of developing habitat teams or burn crews was also mentioned and most agreed it was something of interest worth pursuing.

Ryan Gauger mentioned that the IL Prescribed Fire Council did a program review/analysis to see if and where they have gaps, to be able to improve. He proposed we consider something similar for our Council in developing a state fire plan for Missouri.

Annual Elections Roeslein Alternative Energy (RAE) was voted onto the council unanimously by the Executive Committee. Scot Mikols and Zack Coy (of RAE) were candidates for Vice Chair and Scot was elected.

Jef Hodges rolled from Chair to Member at Large (MAL). Zack Coy, Ryan Gauger, Robin Verble, and Neal Humke were candidates for the 3 remaining MAL seats and Zack, Robin, and Neal were elected.

Motion to adjourn was made at 8:00 by Robin and seconded by Wes.