

June 8th Missouri Prescribed Fire Council Annual Meeting & Prescribed Burn Association Workshop

M.W. Boudreaux Memorial Visitors Center 21629 State Hwy J, Perry, MO 63462

Vice Chair Wes Buckheit welcomed everyone to the Visitors Center at 10:00 a.m. and Chair, Jef Hodges, opened the meeting with a round of introductions and then began the business portion of the meeting. Executive Committee Members present included Chair Jef Hodges, Vice Chair Wes Buckheit, Secretary/Treasurer John Burk, and Members At Large Tom Fielden and Neal Humke. Members not present were Larry Heggemann and Scot Mikols. A list of other attendees is attached.

The first order of business was to approve the minutes from the previous meeting; minutes were approved by Tom Fielden and seconded by Ben Webster.

Discussion on prescribed burn legislation:

Ben Webster provided the council with a summary of the status. A foundational problem with implementing prescribed fire on private lands is the issue of liability. Currently in Missouri liability is not legally defined so acquiring liability coverage is either very expensive or not available at all. The Missouri Department of Conservation in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy and support of the Prescribed Fire Council (MPFC) drafted language that would define liability by defining simple negligence. In other words, a set of standards would be clearly defined as to how burns could be conducted (a certified practitioner following a burn plan) and this would absolve liability in the rare case that the standards were followed and an issue still occurred. HB978 was sponsored by Representative Jeff Shawan in the last legislative session. However, the bill did not get assigned to a committee and did not get a hearing during the 2019 legislative session. We were advised that this is pretty normal and that new legislation usually does take 2 or 3 years to get through the process. The bill will be submitted for consideration again in 2020.

MPFC and PBA Coordinator Position: The need for a dedicated position to coordinate PBA development and MPFC business is recognized by all. Jef, Casey Bergthold, and Tom had a conference call earlier in the year to discuss a possible funding source. It was indicated that NRCS may have funding but that the position would have to be housed under a 501c3. Ben Webster made a motion seconded by Wes Buckheit to establish a committee consisting of Jef Hodges, Tom Fielden, and Casey Bergthold to pursue this possibility further.

\$10,000 NWTF MPFC Support Funding Discussion:

- 6th Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference 7/23-25/19 at State College PA: Initial discussion began with the possibility of using NWTF provided MPFC support funding to send a delegation. Assuming a per person cost of around \$1,000, it was decided by the council that the limited funding available would be better spent. It was also mentioned that it was likely that at least a few MPFC affiliates would likely already be attending and could represent the council.
- It was agreed that funding could be used for necessary equipment but that this would not be the primary use of the NWTF money. Further discussion indicated that equipment was not a primary need for existing PBA's.
- The 10.5k Hazardous Mitigation Grant won by Ben Webster will be the primary funding mechanism to address equipment needs.
 - Funding would not be used for PPE but the council will provide a list of recommended clothing to wear while burning
 - Applicants (PBA's) must be registered in MOBuys (link is on the application form)
 - Expenditures cannot exceed \$4,999.

- A 1:1 match is required but all of the PBA match can be in-kind (existing equipment and volunteer time)
- If NWTF money is used for equipment the same requirements other than MOBuys registration applies
- Application format was discussed and the final version will be available on the MPFC website.
- It was agreed that the majority of the NWTF funding would be used to address training needs.
- Obstacles to training include availability and cost with registration fees, mileage, lodging, and food expenses being limiting. NWTF funding is available to offset these costs by reimbursing actual expenses. An application to apply for these funds will be posted on the website.
- S130/S190 training is available online but Ben Webster indicated that the platform is not very user friendly.
- Ben Webster indicated that he would get CD copies of the training to the PBA leadership.
- S130/S190 also has a field session requirement and Ben Webster and Chris Woodson will offer a 1.5 day session to provide this training that would consist of a Friday night and Saturday timeframe. They offered the following possible dates (9/20 & 21/19, 9/27 & 28/19, and 10/11 & 12/19). Of these dates, a consensus on the best date needs to be locked in by 7/15/19.
- Wes Buckheit was going to reach out to PBA leadership to gauge interest and select the best date for the S130/S190 field portion of the training but the East Central PBA expressed interest at the meeting.
- PBA members in attendance were asked for additional training needs:
 - Chainsaw training was mentioned. It was suggested that we could hire Joe Glenn to customize training for the PBA's; a March date was suggested.

The final order of business was to elect officers. Larry Heggemann retired so his seat became available and the bylaws call for electing 2 member at large positions annually. Neal Humke was the longest standing member at large of the 3 remaining positions but has not yet served 6 years so he was available for reelection. Neal nominated Dr. Robin Verble who is the Director of the Missouri University of Science & Technology Ozark Research Field Station with fire ecology as a primary research interest. Only Robin and Neal were nominated for the Member at Large positions and were approved by the council. Dr. Verble's contact information is:

573-341-4831 and verble@mst.edu

A motion to adjourn the business portion of the meeting was made by Tom Fielden and seconded by Wes Buckheit at 11:20

Working lunch and facilitated discussion was initiated by Wesley Hanks at 12:30:

Discussion of PBA Membership :

- PBA membership is developed and grown through landowner contacts from Private Land Conservationists and QF/PF Biologists. It was also suggested that, once initiated, there is also some "nosey neighbor" growth when they see the work being done.
- To encourage "nosey neighbor" growth it was suggested that road signs be put up in the vicinity of burns prior to ignition. Ben Webster suggested that this should be standard operating procedure on all burns as a precaution.
- It was also suggested that informational cards could be created for existing members to distribute.
- It was also suggested that we should reach out to existing landowner cooperatives. These folks already have the organizational structure in place so this should be low hanging fruit.
- Membership is tracked from signup sheets that include emergency contact information at burns and that information is transferred to a master list.
- Dues are typically paid at annual meetings which are usually in June or July and are typically \$25.

Equipment Maintenance:

- The landowner on the next scheduled burn is responsible for maintaining equipment and returning it in working order.
- Landowner makes sure that folks in attendance on burns know how to use what they have and understand the plan and procedure. This is the reason for requiring attendance at 2 burns prior to having your property burned.
- Burn trailers have a check list that stays with the trailer to make sure that everything is there before the site is left.

PBA Operation:

- E-mail and texts are used to do burn day outreach. The Mark Twain PBA uses an App that does group texts called "Group Me"
- Burn plans are reviewed by PBA board prior to 1 March to establish schedule priority.
- PBA usually meet twice annually; once to review plans early in the calendar year and once at their general annual meeting usually in Midsummer.

The remainder of the classroom portion of the meeting 1:30-2:30 included power point presentation by Tom Fielden and Neal Humke on the following topics:

- How to use fire to reach specific objectives
 - Type of stand
 - Time of year
 - Invasive species
- Optimal weather/fuel conditions
 - Conditions to avoid
- Preparation
- Firing methods

From 2:45-4:30 there was a Field Tour at Mark Twain State Park and USACE Recreation Area where some of the woodland restoration work was observed and discussed.

QF/PF hosted a social including dinner and refreshments at the Frank Russell Shelter House that began at 4:30.