

September 11th MO Prescribed Fire Council

Catalyst Center for Business, Perryville Missouri 10:00-1:30

Chair Wes Buchheit called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. that started with a round of introductions. Executive Committee Members in attendance were: Vice Chair Scot Mikols, Secretary/Treasurer John Burk, and Member At Large Neal Humke. Members not present were: Members at Large Robin Verble, Zack Coy, and Jef Hodges. 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 Neal Humke and seconded by Scot Mikols.

Legislation Wes started the meeting with the announcement of HB369 being signed into law by Governor Parson in July and it went into effect on 8/28/21. The Missouri Prescribed Fire Council and its affiliates have been instrumental throughout the 3 year process in making this happen; from finding bill sponsors, to assisting with crafting the language, to providing testimony, to rallying the troops. The importance of the law was also covered. Now negligence as it relates to the use of prescribed fire is legally defined. The reason that this is important is that, in the absence of this law, everyone using prescribed fire was assessed at the same level of risk by the insurance industry. This meant that insurance for practitioners and private landowners was either completely unavailable or unaffordable. It is hoped that this law will increase the use of prescribed fire by reducing this major hurdle. Jef Hodges and Zach Coy are currently working on a fact sheet designed to inform the insurance industry of this significant change and the benefits of it. Their goal is to have this produced and distributed by the end of the year.

Online Burn Course Ben provided an update for the online prescribed fire training course. The platform for the course is being produced by the same company that runs the online hunter safety training program (Kalkomey). As such, Ben shared that the development process has taken longer than anticipated. However, he is optimistic that the course should be available by 10/1/21. The course platform is "proceed at your pace" is online and includes 5 units with a 50 question test at the end. If the test is passed, the program prints off a certificate of completion that the participant takes with them to the one day field portion of the training. These field days will be offered by MDC and partners similar to previous burn workshops and once that field day is completed, the certificate is signed off on and the individual is certified to conduct prescribed burns under the provisions of HB369. Ben is also working on the particulars to make sure that those individuals that have completed the previously offered burn workshops would also qualify as being certified. However, they would likely have to produce the documentation proving that they completed these trainings. Because of the fickle nature of weather and its importance to fire behavior and thus the ability to execute a live fire during the field portion of the training it was stated by Ben that the field portion would provide live fire if possible but the workshop would also have to provide a viable option on the date scheduled if a live fire was not possible. Wes and Neal requested that the MPFC be given the opportunity to provide comment on suggested standards that should be met in workshops that cannot provide a live fire option.

Prescribed Fire Coordinator Position Update Wes informed the group that the funding for this position was secured but that organizational changes within PF/QF has delayed the hiring process. Casey took a promotion so his position (State Coordinator) is currently open. That position should be filled soon and once it is filled the first order of business for the State Coordinator will be to hire the Prescribed Fire Coordinator. The target date mentioned was to have this person onboard by the end of the year.

Fire Needs Assessment Ryan shared that getting the baseline information from fire practitioners continue to be a challenge. Of about 94 entities that were sent access to the survey only about 20 have responded. Please encourage folks that you know do burns to assist us in getting this information. The importance of developing a needs assessment

is that it not only allows you to more effectively utilize your existing resources but it can also be very effective in attracting federal dollars that can expand capacity. States that have these in place get more funding than those that do not. Completing a detailed needs assessment can be expensive so the goal is to try to get a university to bite as a graduate student project. There have not been any takers as of yet. Neal also mentioned that an additional benefit of having this type of information is to feed the insurance companies fire related data. Their risk assessments and associated premiums are data driven.

Grant Money John shared that there is \$4,000 remaining in the NWTF grant and that he would apply for 2022 funding to bump this back up to \$10,000. Ben reported that the Pure Air PBA received \$19,000 and that the newly formed Foothills PBA received \$10,250 through his source for prescribed burning equipment. Ben is in the process of trying to secure an additional \$30,000 added to his line item budget for this purpose and should have word on this soon.

Website Lisa McBrayer with PF/QF updated our website to include the “log your burn” reporting tool and also added a feature that allows users to locate available contractors. Currently, any interested prescribed burn contractor can send an e-mail to Wes requesting an application form that includes information about their business and where they are willing to work. The form can also be accessed at the following link: <https://form.jotform.com/210337196806053>

They are then added to the site as an available contractor. Ryan expressed concern over this because we do not require any type of a vetting process to be listed. It was pointed out that the list of contractors are not endorsed by MPFC we are just allowing individuals and businesses to hang their shingle on our site. Attached to the contractor list, we do provide a list of questions that interested clients should ask potential contractors to assess their qualifications. Ryan suggested that we may want to revisit that list of questions and make sure it is very thorough. The current list can be viewed at the following link:

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c8a58baa-995e-4dce-94e3-90614cd9bdbb/downloads/Recommendations%20for%20hiring%20a%20prescribed%20fire%20c.pdf?ver=1631540887861>

Annual Elections Normally the elections occur as part of the annual business meeting. However, the bylaws require that a month’s notice be given to the full council of a slate of candidates and for the full council to offer other candidates for consideration. That did not occur this year so we will conduct that part of our business electronically at a later date.

With the exception of the Secretary and Treasurer positions, no other Executive Committee member can serve more than 6 consecutive years. Neal Humke has reached that benchmark so he must step down from the Executive Committee for at least one year. Every year we elect 3 MAL positions and they can be reelected until they reach their 6th year. Jef is in a protected position because he is past Chair. Therefore, Robin, and Zach can each be reelected and there will be one open seat as MAL.

Every other year the sitting Chair rolls to a MAL position, and the Vice Chair takes over as Chair. That happened at the previous annual meeting. During the 2022 annual meeting, Wes will roll to a MAL position and Scot Mikols will become the Chair. Because of recent changes that will require a significant amount of his time away from Missouri, Scot expressed concern that he may not be able to do an adequate job as Chair when that transition occurs. John Burk will work with Wes Buchheit to distribute a slate of candidates and get this out to the full council with these minutes.

Motion to adjourn was made at 11:23 by Neal Humke and seconded by Wes Buchheit.