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2022

ADDRESSING EASTERN REDCEDAR IN THE SANDHILLS

TNC BURNING UPDATES

Continued dry conditions and county wide burn bans limited our ability to host events that include live fire, like workshops and the Niobrara Valley TREX. Instead, we are offering trainings like S-131 and a burn plan writing workshop that don't rely on putting fire on the ground. The 2022 Niobrara Valley TREX has been postponed to April 2023 with more details to follow. We're also putting efforts into prepping units that we hope to burn once the weather conditions improve and burn bans are lifted.

THIS WORK IS POSSIBLE DUE TO THE SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS:



TRAININGS

We hosted a Line Boss Training Class with help from NE Game & Parks, Pheasants Forever and Northern Prairie Land Trust at the Niobrara Valley Preserve September 13-14th. The Line Boss is a very important leadership position and responsible for overseeing ignition and holding along a firebreak on a prescribed burn. The curriculum for the class followed the objectives for S-131 Advanced Wildland Firefighter which is a nationally recognized training course and each participant received a course certificate.

Over the course of two days, participants had classroom instruction on weather tools, radio communications, crew organizations, and how to lead briefings. On-the-ground exercises in the afternoons gave students a chance to see what the role could feel like on a real burn day. Participants took turns practicing as line bosses with coaches running simulations. Other items taught were ignition patterns, suppression skills, and incident paperwork. Overall, there were 14 participants and 8 coaches at the training.



LANDOWNER VISITS

Over the last few months the fire team has been working with landowners on future prescribed burns. The drought conditions this year have postponed several projects which will be picked up again this winter or next spring once we get some moisture. The team met with 2 landowners in the sandhills who are new to prescribed fire.

In August, Chad and Kate Nootenboom (Prescribed Fire Technician) met with Ashley Garrelts from Sandhills Task Force to visit with Rosalea Gift who ranches south of Thedford in Thomas County. We toured Rosalea's beautiful ranch and learned about the hard work her and husband Leon put in to keep cedar trees from taking over the pastures. However, Rosalea is now at a point where she is having a hard time keeping up and thinking about using prescribed fire. Most of the cedar trees are small and a moderate prescribed fire will be successful.

CONFERENCES

We attended and presented at The Nebraska Grazing Conference on August 13-14th. Ashley moderated a panel of landowners (including Joel Klammer) that talked about their experience with prescribed fire. The landowners discussed how they got into prescribed fire, why they added it into their management practices, and some challenges they've faced along the way. It was wonderful to hear about their experiences, and the panel was received with nothing but positive comments.

We also attended the Great Plains Fire Summit/Patch Burn Grazing Conference August 23-25th. Ashley and Amanda presented about our fire program, which spurred great conversation about future collaborations with partners. Our booth received a lot of traffic and we were able to discuss several upcoming trainings and workshops with numerous individuals.



EVENTS

On August 3rd, we hosted an informational dinner in Ericson to discuss the formation of a Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) in the area. A great amount of interest was expressed from the 47 attendees and follow up meetings are being scheduled for later this year.

During the meeting, two members of a nearby PBA talked about their experiences so far and lessons they've learned. Attendees were able to ask questions of those ranchers, as well as resource professionals, to see how a future association could work for them.





Images from the S-131 training and the Nebraska Grazing Conference with the landowner panel that Ashley moderated.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX):

Niobrara Valley TREX: **Postponed to April 2023 (Details TBD)**

Prescribed Fire Workshops and Conferences:

Rx Burn Plan Writing Workshop: **October 4-5th**



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