

JAN
-
MAY
2023

ADDRESSING EASTERN REDCEDAR IN THE SANDHILLS

TNC BURNING UPDATES

Continued dry conditions and a statewide burn ban limited our ability to conduct prescribed burns this spring. We still hosted a Niobrara Valley TREC and were able to get some acres burned, including a burn at the University of Nebraska Foundation's Barta Brothers' Ranch.



Photo by Rand Snyder



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



GARFIELD/WHEELER COUNTY PBA

The team met with the Garfield Loup Wheeler prescribed burn association in January and February.

During these meetings, the group created and approved bylaws and elected a board of directors and officers. In their first season, they were able to complete six burns. In May, they met again to discuss how those went and any changes they want to make in the future.

A big thank you to partners from Pheasants Forever, NEGPC, USDA-NRCS, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, and other groups that helped provide guidance to landowners throughout the entire process.



FIELD VISITS

Ashley, Chad and Joel visited 9 sites in Brown, Garfield, Rock, Thomas, and Wheeler counties to evaluate options for prescribed burns. Final burn plans were developed for most of the locations with the remaining sites in the draft or planning stages. In spite of the dry spring conditions that limited opportunity to burn, fire was applied on two of the tracts. Final acres impacted will be well over 4000 when all the burns are completed.

Additional sites in Garfield county and Thomas county completed burns that totaled about 1150 acres. These locations had been visited in 2022 and the burn plans were completed during the winter of 2023.



TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS/EVENTS

January: Chad and Ashley gave presentations on fire behavior and prescribed fire techniques at a Pheasants Forever workshop in Ericson to 20 participants. Chad also helped teach S-130/S-190 class in Ericson at the Ericson Fire Department to 7 participants.

February: Chad helped teach a S-130/S-190 class in Broken Bow to 12 participants.

March: Chad taught S-219 Firing Operations course in Ord. He, Ben Wheeler, and Kody Wohlers instructed 24 students on the Firing Boss position in both wildfire and prescribed fire operations. Students represented TNC (Joel, Amanda, and Ashley), Nebraska Game and Parks, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Pheasants Forever, Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa, Pottawattamie County Conservation, Central Platte NRD, and Iowa DNR. Also in March, the fire team and NVP staff joined with a couple volunteer firefighters and completed their work capacity tests and RT-130, or fire refresher course. During this training, Chad instructed on the previous year's fire activity, watch out situations and safety, lessons learned, and students practiced a shelter deployment.

On March 30, the Fire Team and Ted Turner Enterprises co-hosted a prescribed fire training out of Fawn Lake Ranch. There was a combination of 30 participants and coaches who listened to a morning of instruction and then spent the afternoon conducting a small prescribed burn. Agencies represented included Nebraska Game and Parks, Northern Prairies Land Trust, Pheasants Forever, UNL- Extension, and Ted Turner Enterprises from Nebraska and South Dakota. Instructors discussed how to set up a prescribed fire, watch out conditions, equipment, radios, and the basics of firefighting. The prescribed burn was shut down early due to shifting weather conditions, but overall it was a great training for everyone.

April: Chad assisted and taught at Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week. He instructed a group of college students and completed a training evaluation for a FFT1 and RXB2.



Fire Refresher at the Valentine VFD



Pheasants Forever workshop in Ericson

MEET PAUL AND KEVIN

Meet Paul Stofferahn and Kevin Meyer, our new prescribed fire technicians. Paul is originally from Lincoln and has a bachelors degree in Fisheries and Wildlife. He's spent the last few years working at various natural resource jobs such as Lincoln Parks and Recreation and the Lower Platte South NRD. He's excited to learn about the Sandhills and the many benefits of prescribed fire.

Kevin is originally from Gretna, but has spent the last 20 years working in both the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains in agriculture, wilderness outfitting, and on several volunteer fire departments. He's excited to work with landowners with prescribed fire.



Kevin and Paul

BRUSH PILES

The amount of snow we got this winter made site visits and other activities hard, but with the protection of the snow, the fire team and preserve staff were able to burn over 100 tree piles on the Niobrara Valley Preserve. Burning these piles in the winter makes prescribed burns later in the year safer by removing the larger, heavy fuels that could throw embers outside of units.





Photo by Chelsie West

NIORRARA VALLEY PRESCRIBED FIRE TRAINING EXCHANGE (TREX)

The 2023 Niobrara Valley TREX had 35 participants representing 6 different countries (Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Canada, and the U.S.) come together at the Niobrara Valley preserve to learn about prescribed fire from April 9-22nd. Adverse weather conditions and a statewide burn ban allowed for only one prescribed burn to be conducted during that time (581 acres), but participants were trained up on equipment, burn plan writing, and scouting burn units. On April 19, the group visited the Nebraska National Forest in the Bessey Ranger District to tour the aftereffects of the Bovee wildfire. The staff there communicated their land management and the impacts that the high intensity fire had on the forests and rangelands there.

Participants also presented on their home units and shared about their individual agencies' work in their home units. It gave participants an opportunity to learn from each other and learn about the objectives and challenges in fire. Agencies represented included the following: Utah DNR, University of Nebraska Extension, British Columbia Wildfire Service, US Forest Service, CONAFER(Brazil), Plan INFOCA (Spain), BIA Pine Ridge Agency, JIRCO (Mexico), SMPC- Servico Municipal de Protecao Civil (Portugal), Sapadores Florestal - Paredes de Coura (Portugal), Xunta de Galicia (Spain), BRIF (Spain), USDA-NRCS, City of Lincoln Parks and Recreation, Pheasants Forever, Ponca Volunteer Fire & Rescue, MT DNRC, Gig Harbor Fire and Medic One, University of California Cooperative Extension, South Dakota Wildland Fire, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Northern Prairies Land Trust, and the Nature Conservancy.



Photo by Rand Snyder

SPRING BURNS

CC Angus-915 acres
 Bodyfield - 260 acres
 NVP Sandhills - 1043 acres
 Fawn Lake - 3 acres
 Barta Brothers Burn- 209 acres

Total: 2, 4030 acres



SPRING BURN SEASON

BURNS
COMPLETED

4

LANDOWNER
VISITS

9

FIRE TRAINING/
WORKSHOPS

6

FIRE TRAINING
PARTICIPANTS

128

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sandhills Ranch Expo Niobrara Valley Prescribed Fire Association Booth June 21st – 22nd
- Barta Brothers Ranch Open House July 25th



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