

NORTH CAROLINA PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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Spring 2008

Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy. - Dale Carnegie

I am anxious, you might even say afraid, that the future could be bleak for those of us who wish to retain prescribed fire as a land management tool. The barriers to burning are many and include rapid urbanization, forest fragmentation, an expanding wildland-urban interface, an apathetic public, and a litigious society. State and federal government programs often favor fire suppression over prescribed burning. Short-sighted policymakers and community leaders are unable to see that their current efforts to suppress the use of prescribed fire only increase future wildfire risks.

As Carnegie writes, the best way to conquer fear is to take action against that which makes you afraid. Many would say that fear is an unfavorable emotion, but fear and anxiety always have led me to my most productive moments. To ensure that the opponents of prescribed burning do not extinguish the torch, we advocates for prescribed fire must use our anxieties to drive us to become more engaged in the debate. To facilitate the involvement of fire advocates in that debate, the NC Prescribed Fire Council (NCPFC) was formed.

But I fear that the NCPFC is not doing enough. I worry that we are not properly skilled to engage the media or influence policy. I am concerned that those with the energy needed to lead the Council will fade away over time and that new leaders will not emerge. Despite these moments of doubt, I am optimistic that NCPFC members will work diligently to maintain the Council's current momentum.

Several simple actions are necessary to maintain the momentum. The 80/20 rule states that 20% of the people do 80% of the work. I challenge Council members to enlist the 100/100 rule, in which case every person makes some contribution. The NCPFC must continue to expand its membership in number and diversity, making sure to involve those with skills that will help us engage the media and influence policy. Council members, including foresters, wildlife biologists, ecologists, air quality scientists, environmental educators, and private contractors, must work cooperatively so that our efforts are directed toward a common goal. Lastly, we must do what Carnegie recommends – go out and get busy!

In developing this newsletter, I've taken my last action as NCPFC Chair. Terry Sharpe already has begun to lead and maintain and even build our momentum. I've enjoyed my time as Chair, but feel like I should have done more. We must all do more if prescribed fire is to remain in the land manager's toolbox.

Submitted by Chris Moorman, Chair - NCPFC (chris_moorman@ncsu.edu).

STATEWIDE BURN BAN LIFTED

In early March, the statewide burn ban that had been in place for several weeks was lifted. The efforts of the NCPFC and its membership likely played a key role in removal of the statewide ban. The Council, member agencies and organizations (e.g., NC Forestry Association), and individual members like you sent letters to the Governor, DENR Secretary, and NCDFR Director asking that the statewide burn ban be lifted following rains in February. The Council letter also recommended that a burn ban should distinguish between prescribed burning administered by professionals and other forms of burning (e.g., backyard debris burning). Council recommended that the decision to implement a statewide burn ban NOT be based on water shortages in urban areas or unusual one-day weather events. The Council also asked that future burn bans be instituted by natural resource professionals based on appropriate science and consider the importance of local weather and environmental conditions. Prescribed burning is an excellent tool with which land managers across the state can lower fuel loads, reduce the risk of wildfires, and protect the lives and property of North Carolina citizens.

2007-2008 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

The second annual meeting of the NCPFC was held on January 16, 2008. Council Chair Chris Moorman welcomed the group, discussed the steering committee make-up, and noted the diversity of background of the approximately 65 meeting participants. He stated the Council's current membership stood at approximately 140 wildlife biologists, ecologists, foresters, environmental educators, and others. Dr. Moorman then recognized State Forester Wib Owen, who welcomed everyone to the meeting. Moorman recognized the NC Division of Forest Resources for their financial support of the meeting and thanked NC Wildlife Resources Commission member Steve Windham for sponsoring lunch.

The Program

- John Gilbert (Longleaf Alliance) spoke on the history of longleaf pine.
- Terry Sharpe reviewed national efforts to develop a coalition of state fire councils. He noted there are 30 states with fire councils either operating or in development.
- Andy Wood, coastal ecologist with NC Audubon, related his experience restoring (through the use of prescribed fire) a pine savannah adjacent to his house near Holly Shelter Game Land. Among other things, he told the group that most land/homeowners had no conception of fire ecology and that education is critical to gaining acceptance for prescribed burning and to combat the associated myths.
- Gary Curcio (NCDFR) updated attendees on the Smoke Management Plan (SMP). Mr. Curcio noted the NC Division of Air Quality was currently reviewing the plan and that they will report on recommended changes to the sections related to law enforcement, monitoring, and rapid deployment by mid-February. He stated the goal was to have interpretive consistency between the state agencies. He also noted the need for 1) training on fuels, moisture content, smoke dispersion models, and National Weather Service radar interpretation; 2) development of a computerized database showing the location of burns; and 3) EPA's involvement as a partner.
- Margit Bucher (TNC) reported on the Fire Learning Network (FLN). The FLN is a cooperative multi-agency community-based project intended to restore fire-dependent native

plants. Through the use of geospatial data on a landscape scale, the group has assessed existing vegetative types and has projected the long-term need for substantially increased burning to restore native populations of plants.

- A panel consisting of Angie Carl (TNC), John Gilbert (LLA), Bill Pickens (NCDFR), and Consulting Forester Jim Gray discussed the use of prescribed fire in young longleaf pine stands. The panel agreed that, accounting for management objectives and if used properly, fire could be an effective silvicultural tool to improve stand conditions without significant mortality to longleaf seedlings.

Subcommittee Breakout Summaries

Education and Outreach – Several new members will help diversify the backgrounds and abilities of the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee brainstormed and prioritized projects for the coming year. For each project, a team of 2-3 people was identified. Two projects emerged as the main focus in the next few months: 1) update and improve the Council website and 2) develop and print a brochure to target adults in close proximity to areas that do prescribed burning. If anyone in the Council has an idea for the Education and Outreach Subcommittee or suggestions to the website, please contact Kelley Van Druen at kelley_vandruen@fws.gov.

Data Collection – Suggested improved NWS weather predictions related to burning and development of GPS data showing where burning is being done. Contact Matt Flint (matt.flint@nc.usda.gov).

Policy – Proposed working with NC DFR on legislative initiatives, developing scientifically-based guidelines for burn bans, monitor and comment on the SMP, and encourage Governor's Office to issue a proclamation for the use of prescribed fire. Contact Bob Mickler (rmickler@alionscience.com) or Cynthia Van der Wiele (cvander@ncsu.edu).

Implementation – Recommended working through the Forestry Education and Outreach Program to offer training on the SMP, tools for collecting and interpreting weather data, and burner insurance. Also recommended better definition of smoke-sensitive areas and the continued ability to burn at night. Contact Margit Bucher (mbucher@tnc.org).

Annual Meeting – Suggested an August 2008 meeting in Morganton with shorter presentations with more time for questions and audience interaction. Possible topics include: further SMP discussion, comparison of alternatives to fire, and a pre or post meeting field tour. Contact Dean Simon (simondm@earthlink.net).

Membership – To increase membership, suggested capitalizing on annual meeting location to attract local burners and advocates, “piggyback” with Education and Outreach Subcommittee's efforts, archive newsletters and have membership application on website, automatically receive membership when attending a meeting, and bring a friend to meetings. Contact Mark Megalos (mark.megalos@ncsu.edu).

Elections and Wrap-up

Vice-Chair Terry Sharpe reported on the election results. **Dean Simon** was elected Vice-Chair, **Scott Pohlman** as Secretary/Treasurer, and **Doug Sprouse, Lea Wofford, Scott Hartley,** and **John Isenhour** as Members-At-Large of the Steering Committee. Current Members-At-Large **John Ann Shearer, Brandon Price, Jim Prevette,** and **Jeff Bouchelle** will remain on the Steering Committee for one more year. Moorman then presented Education and Outreach Subcommittee Chair **Kelley Van Druten** with the Council's first *Prescribed Burner of the Year* award for "service to the Council and outstanding support for the continued use of prescribed fire as a land management tool in North Carolina." Dr. Moorman wrapped up the meeting by thanking Terry Sharpe, Angie Carl, and Susan Carl for arranging the meeting. He then noted that the Council's diversity of backgrounds and perspectives is a strength of the organization and then summarized the major issues facing the Council – Wildland-Urban Interface, air quality issues and public perception, and working effectively with the media. *Submitted by Stephen Whitfield, RF, ACF, Acting Secretary*

Prescribed Burner of the Year Award

At the NCPFC Annual Meeting on 16 January, Wildland-Urban Interface Specialist Kelley Van Druten of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge was named "Prescribed Burner of the Year - 2007" by the North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council. Van Druten's award was "for service to the Council and outstanding support for the continued use of prescribe fire as a land management tool in North Carolina." The recognition was for Van Druten's work on the Education and Outreach Subcommittee. USFWS District Fire Management Officer Tom Crews praised Van Druten for her accomplishment and her dedication to fire outreach. "Kelley always goes above and beyond the call of duty. She's a first rate biologist, a first rate firefighter, and - more importantly in this case - a first rate communicator," he said.



Council Chair Chris Moorman recognizes Kelley Van Druten as North Carolina Prescribed Burner of the Year for her service to the Council and outstanding support for the continued use of prescribed fire as a land management tool in North Carolina.

SAVE THE DATE

The NCPFC will coordinate the NCSU Forestry Issues Teleconference on November 12th, 2008. The topics covered during the 3-hour teleconference will relate to current prescribed burning issues. For more information, visit <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/forest/feop/programs.html>.

PROGRAM UPDATES

NC Sandhills Prescribed Fire Council (NCSPFC)

The NCSPFC had another great year. Following are some of its accomplishments:

- NCSPFC held its annual meeting in September at Weymouth Woods State Nature Preserve. Speakers were from the NCDFR, USFWS, and NC State Parks. Topics included MOU's, Smoke Management, Wildland Urban-Interface issues, and NC State Parks Fire Management Program. There also was an open discussion to plan future events and cooperative fire management projects.
- TNC and Ft. Bragg assisted one another on a large wildfire at TNC's Long Valley Farm and on Ft. Bragg Overhills area in February. An arsonist started nearly a dozen wildfires along the TNC/Ft. Bragg boundary on Presidents Day 2007. TNC staff detected these fires and cleaned fire breaks on Ft. Bragg to contain them. TNC and Ft. Bragg staff burned out 150 acres on TNC's Long Valley Farm to protect important RCW habitat and historical structures.
- NCSPFC hosted and coordinated three wildland fire courses: S-211 Portable Pumps and S-215 Wildland Fire Operations in the Urban-Interface, S-130 S-190 I-100 L-180 at TNC's Long Valley Farm in Spring Lake. These courses were attended by nearly 60 students from Ft. Bragg, TNC, NC and SC State Parks, NC Botanical Garden, Francis Marion National Forest, and private citizens.
- NCSPFC will continue to work on media and public outreach projects when possible. It has been difficult getting local media interested in prescribed fire. They do enjoy wildfires though.

Submitted by Mike Norris, Land Steward/Fire Specialist, The Nature Conservancy.

National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils

Since its formation, the National Coalition has strived for national participation and acceptance, which now includes 30 states, British Columbia and Mexico, an increase over the five states with existing councils at that time. The National Coalition continues to achieve its primary goals of providing a forum to support prescribed fire councils across the U.S. and facilitate their formation, advocating the ecological imperative for prescribed fire, emphasizing prescribed fire's benefits to public health/safety, and serving as an advocate and clearinghouse on regional and national levels. Accomplishments during 2007 include:

- Developed mission statement, strategic plan, and organizational structure plan
- Presentation @ IAWF Fuels Conference in Destin, FL
- Presentation @ IAWF 1st Human Dimensions of Wildland Fire Conference in Ft. Collins, CO
- Provided assistance to numerous start-up Councils across US
- Secured the southern US with established Councils
- Hosted EPA Region IV Administrator for prescribed fire educational experience

- Attended future research needs workshop hosted by EPA Region IV and Dept. of Energy @ ORCAS in Oakridge, TN
- Organized conference call between prescribed fire councils and EPA re: revision of Interim Policy
- Provided written comment to EPA re: revision of Interim Policy
- Participated in tri-state (FL, GA, SC) public education strategy workshop
- Presentation to NASF Fire Committee & CMS Conference in Orlando, FL
- Possibly the greatest achievement...has been the significant increase in communication between prescribed fire practitioners in various regions and ecosystem types.

Within the next year, we plan to appoint our first Governing Board, develop by-laws, develop an inclusive Coalition website, gain input from all States on their needs, and hold our first meeting. We must all work together to protect the application of prescribed fire in the landscape and we look forward to working with North Carolina in the future. For more National Coalition information, please contact Mark A. Melvin, Chair at 229-734-4706 or at mark.melvin@jonesctr.org. *Submitted by Mark Melvin, National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils.*

UPDATE ON PRESCRIBED FIRE LIABILITY INSURANCE

The need for more burning on private lands recognized by natural resource professionals. However, the availability of private contractors often limits burning on private lands. Affordable liability insurance is difficult for contract burners to locate and acquire. In the fall of 2007, inquiries were made to known insurance agencies which provide prescribed burning insurance, and the following information was gathered. It is not meant to be exhaustive or complete, but provides some basic insight to this situation.

Reasons for High Premiums and Lack of Availability

1. Small population size: prescribed burners as a group, both statewide and nationally, do not generate enough revenue to promote insurance competition. Furthermore, a small local agency does not have the funds to cover exposure given the income generated by a few premiums. Example: if a company had 50 burners, each paying \$2000 premiums, total revenue is only \$100,000.
2. The perceived risk of prescribed burning is higher than the actual risk due to media attention of a few catastrophic incidents. Insurance companies have not taken the effort to research the actual risks associated with Rx fire.
3. Prescribed fire is viewed as a specialty service which is largely unnecessary and does not take into account the benefits of fuel reduction.

Policy Applications & Coverage

1. Most policies are non-auditable, meaning records are not submitted to agency.
2. Coverage is more difficult when prescribed burning is listed as a high percentage of business income, regardless of number of acres burned.
3. Any insurance claims in recent history are grounds for disapproval.
4. Most policies have a \$1,000,000 coverage limit, but some allow you to select the limits which may affect your premium.
5. All policies require the following for claim consideration: written burn plan, burn boss certification, and valid burn permits

Helpful Solutions

1. Landowner insurance reductions through Firewise
2. Statewide/Regional Association
3. Better assessments on actual escaped fires.

<u>Insurance Company Providers</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1. C.D. Rigdon & Associates 630.696.4043 Contact: Chris Rigdon	Unlimited Acreage
2. Davis-Garvin Agency P.O. Box 21627 Columbia, SC 29221 800.845.3163 Contact: Kathy Idell	Forester Coverage Additional Landowner Program Dr. Ed Wilson ewilson@davisgarvin.com
3. Gillingham & Associates 800.849.9228	Forester Coverage ACF Discount
4. Outdoor Insurance Group 400 N. Woodlawn Suite 100 Wichita, KS 67208 888.683.7308 admin@oigcorp.com	Forester Coverage ACF Discount
5. Sportsmans Insurance Agency 1450 North US 1, Suite 500 Ormond Beach, FL 32174 800.925.7767 www.siai.net Contact: Heidi Juttner	Landowner insurance for members of Quail Unlimited

Possible Future Providers (need “encouragement”)

1. Manry Rawls (VA)
757.562.6131
2. Forestry Mutual Insurance Company
Eddie Campbell 919.770.6132
3. Forest Landowners Insurance Program
Dan Hildoldt 800.658.7047
4. Arch Specialty
Peter Andreuzzi 646.822.6726
5. Quality Deer Management Association

Understanding the factors that affect premium amounts is quite difficult, but insurance providers still seem to have very little comprehension of the actual risk in conducting prescribed burning. Further communication between fire councils and insurance companies is undoubtedly warranted. *Submitted by Brandon L. Price, Wildland Forestry and Environmental, Inc.*

RESEARCH UPDATE

Reptile and Amphibian Response to Fuel Reduction Treatments

Historically, forests of the southern Appalachians did not burn as frequently as coastal plain forests or piedmont grasslands, but fire was an important form of disturbance in mountain ecosystems. For example, natural and anthropogenic fires helped maintain the mixed-oak forests of the region. Although fires were suppressed in the southern Appalachians throughout much of the 20th century, more recently prescribed fire has been used by land managers in the region. Because of the risks to property and air quality often associated with fires, mechanical or manual fuel reduction treatments have been proposed as suitable surrogates of prescribed fire. These techniques are especially valuable when close to human development in the wildland-urban interface, or where fuel loads are exceedingly high as is the case where rhododendron and mountain laurel thickets have expanded upslope.

Recent use of prescribed fire and mechanical or manual fire surrogates to reduce fuel hazards has spurred interest in their effects on wildlife. Studies of fire in the southern Appalachians have documented few effects on reptiles and amphibians. However, these studies were conducted after only one fire and for only a short time period (1-3 years) after the fire. Much less is known about the effects of fire surrogates on wildlife.

We assessed the response of reptiles and amphibians on the Green River Game Land in western North Carolina to fire and fire surrogate treatments three to five years after initial treatments and after two prescribed burns. From mid-May to mid-August in 2006 and 2007, we trapped reptiles and amphibians using drift fence arrays distributed evenly among three replicates of four treatments: 1) control, 2) burn, 3) mechanical fuel removal, and 4) burn following mechanical fuel removal. During mechanical fuel reduction in winter 2001-02, trees over 1.8m and under 10.2cm dbh and all mountain laurel and rhododendron were cut using chainsaws and left on site. The first burns were conducted in March of 2003. A second prescribed burn was implemented in February 2006 in the burn and mechanical-burn treatments. Both prescribed burns in mechanical-burn treatments were hotter than in burn treatments because of the excessive fuel load left on site following the chainsaw activity. These hotter fires in the mechanical-burn treatments killed many overstory trees and opened the canopy.

We captured fewer salamanders in mechanical-burn treatments than in burn treatments (captures in the mechanical-burn were similar to control and mechanical treatments), but we captured more lizards in mechanical-burn treatments than in all other treatments. Greater lizard captures in mechanical-burn treatments likely occurred because of the increased ground temperatures following canopy mortality. Salamander captures in burn treatments may have been higher because of increased food availability or increased capture probability due to higher movement rates. Our study indicates that repeated, high-intensity fires that reduce canopy coverage may negatively affect salamander populations but improve habitat for lizards. Conversely, less intensive fires appear to have little effect on reptile and amphibian populations. Response of reptiles and amphibians to fire and fire surrogate treatments should be monitored over longer time periods and after many burns. *Submitted March 14, 2008 by Charlotte E. Matthews and Chris E. Moorman, PhD, NC State University and Katie Greenberg, PhD, USDA Forest Service.*

FIRE-ADAPTED PLANT HIGHLIGHT

Wake up those sleepin' curleyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*) - The laundry list of fire-dependent and fire-*responsive* Piedmont plants is long. These fire-dependent and -responsive plants are often relegated to highways and other managed rights-of-way that provide a fortuitous refugium for these shade intolerant herbaceous taxa. The bush-hog now serves as a barely adequate substitute for bison, but these plants none-the-less welcome the blade...

One of the many fire-responsive plants is *Clematis ochroleuca*, curleyheads, which is found in “dry woodlands and woodland borders, generally over mafic or calcareous rocks, such as diabase, gabbro, or calcareous siltstone” (Weakley 2007). In mown but fire-suppressed sites, the plant struggles along. But after a fire, the numbers explode. Plants will astonishingly emerge from underground structures where they have laid dormant for years. I have even seen whole patches sprout – one-meter across – where prior to the fire there had been no sign (hide nor hair) of curleyheads.

Root and rhizome dormancy allows a whole suite of plants to survive between-fire periods. But they cannot lie dormant indefinitely – so liberate these remarkable plants from their subterranean refuge through regular prescribed burning! *Submitted by Johnny Randall, Ph.D., Assistant Director, North Carolina Botanical Garden, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*



To join the **North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council**, complete this form and mail it to the address below. You can also fax the form or contact Mark by email.

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NAME: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ Email: _____

Are you interested in participating on a Council subcommittee? YES _____ NO _____

If YES, which one? Education and Outreach _____

Policy and Regulatory _____

Membership _____

Implementation _____

Annual Meeting _____