

NORTH CAROLINA PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council is to foster cooperation among all parties in North Carolina with an interest or stake in prescribed fire.



Council Statement

"I am honored to serve as your President for 2021-2022! Thank you all for your continued participation and enthusiasm in our prescribed fire community. We have a fantastic and active Board this year, our committees are being reinvigorated, and we are excited to bring this newsletter back to our members. I wish you all a successful 2022, with lots of burning opportunities, and look forward to seeing you this summer at our annual meeting!"

- Jennifer Fawcett
2021-2022 President

Important Dates

S. Blue Ridge FLN Workshop

- May 24-27

[More Information](#)

Certified Burner Courses

- May 16, Oct. 3, Dec. 5

[More Information](#)

Longleaf Conference:

- Oct. 25-28

[More Information](#)

Party For the Pine Fire Fest:

- April 23

[More Information](#)

Council Leadership

The North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council brings together natural resource professionals, public and private land managers, and others who support the use of prescribed fire into an organization to:

- Promote public education about the benefits of prescribed fire.
- Advocate for the ability to use prescribed fire as a land management tool now and in the future.
- Increase expertise in prescribed fire by sharing technical and biological information.
- Promote safety, training, and research in the art and science of prescribed fire.
- Review prescribed fire practices, regulations, and policies and suggest improvements.
- Promote best management practices that minimize smoke and air quality impacts from prescribed fires.

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2021 Annual Meeting Recap and 2022 Virtual Field Trip

Although we had to quickly pivot from a hybrid to a virtual meeting due to the COVID-19 Delta variant at the time of the meeting last August, the 2021 Annual Meeting was well-attended with almost 200 people joining, and had a variety of timely and interesting presentations. The meeting, which was held in partnership with the Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers & Scientists (CAFMS) and was originally planned to be held in Morganton, had a western NC focus with a variety of content. Governor Roy Cooper kicked off the meeting by discussing the importance of prescribed fire in NC. Other presentations ranged from Traditional Ecological Knowledge in western NC to an example of a high school student prescribed fire club. If you missed the meeting, or want to re-watch a presentation, the presentation recordings can be viewed below in Video #1. The field trip had a focus on collaboration in western North Carolina, and was held virtually on March 1, 2022. The virtual field trip can be seen in Video #2 and a panel discussion with the presenters can be seen in Video #3!

VIDEO #1



VIDEO #2



VIDEO #3



Article written by Jennifer Fawcett, Lifetime Spark Member

Get Hands-On Experience with a PBA

There are many opportunities for private landowners, students, and others interested in learning how to safely conduct a prescribed burn to gain hands-on experience in prescribed burning by becoming a member of, or attending events hosted by the multiple Prescribed Burn Associations (PBAs). PBAs are groups of landowners and other interested people who form partnerships to pool their knowledge, equipment, and other resources to conduct prescribed fires. NC now has five PBAs: **Bladen Lakes Area PBA** (Bladen, Robeson, Cumberland, Sampson, Pender, Brunswick, New Hanover, and Columbus counties), **Eastern NC PBA** (Nash, Edgecomb, Wilson, Franklin, Green, Wayne, Warren, Northampton, and Halifax counties), **Down East PBA** (Craven, Onslow, Dublin, Carteret, Jones, Lenoir, Beaufort, and Pamlico counties), **NC Sandhills PBA** (Moore, Richmond, Scotland, Hoke, Harnett, and Cumberland counties), **Southern Blue Ridge PBA** (includes, but not limited to, Buncombe, Madison, Yancey, Mitchell, Avery, Caldwell, Burke, and McDowell counties).

If you are interested in learning more or participating in a PBA burn, please contact the NC Forest Service County Ranger or local PBA Coordinator in your area.



[Down East PBA
Sign Up](#)



[Sandhills PBA
Website](#)



[Southern Blue
Ridge PBA Sign Up](#)

Article written by Jennifer Fawcett, Lifetime Spark Member

Founder's Feature - Margit Bucher

Photo from Margit Bucher



Margit Bucher, Council co-founder and its first president, received the Association for Fire Ecology's Lifetime Achievement Award. Bucher recently retired as NC TNC's fire manager.

"The perfect intersection between the science, fire management and people, fueled by passion, curiosity, and friendliness—this is Margit," said Sam Lindblom, Virginia TNC's Fire Program Manager who met Bucher in 1995. "That was a long time ago but from that moment forward Margit has been a constant in my career offering mentoring advice and a lot of good quality critical review." Lindblom said there were many letters of support, which spoke to Margit's passion, kindness and "tireless commitment to nature and people."

Lindblom cited work she led in the 1990s at TNC's Green Swamp Preserve. At the time burning in the longleaf islands surrounded by peat-based pocosins was considered tricky

because peat is so combustible. "The work she did there was groundbreaking. It was nerve wracking. They were lighting organic soils that burn for months on end," he said. "She knew fire was going to be important. Her work carries the weight of how those longleaf pine islands are burned now."

Margit noted those folks who had received it before her including Norm Christensen, Founding Dean of Duke University's Nicholas School. She said that it was in Christensen's classroom that she found fire as her calling. "I am not in his league," she added.

She came from Germany to Duke in an exchange program that she thought would last a year. She thanked her family. "They supported their only daughter to follow her dreams and heart even if that led me far away." She said her mother had named her after a famous opera singer. "Sadly, I have never been able to carry a tune and my highest heel shoes are my fire boots," she said.

Margit noted the importance of fire. **"Keep the flame going so I can see your smoke rising—well dispersed of course."**

Article written by Debbie Crane

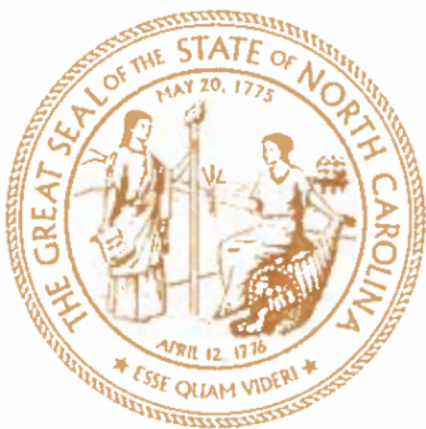
The Fire Council began as a "Fire Team" in 2002 consisting of a few individuals that insisted on working together to address barriers to prescribed burning. That contingency expanded and morphed into the NC Prescribed Fire Council. The main focus was then and still is today, how to accomplish more prescribed burning particularly on private lands. The original team discussed limitations to burning such as insurance, cost share, and training. Gradually more people joined the discussions. The group became aware of Fire Councils in other states and decided that an official Fire Council was needed for North Carolina. In March 2006 the NC Prescribed Fire Council was established with a charter, bylaws, mission statement, and an organizational structure.

2002 Fire Team: Margit Bucher (TNC), Matt Flint (NRCS), Rick Hamilton and Chris Moorman (NCSU), Mark Megalos (NCFS), John Ann Shearer (US FWS), Terry Sharpe (NC WRC)

Article written by John Ann Shearer, Lifetime Spark Member

Hot Takes: Fire News & Stories

Prescribed Fire Awareness Month Proclamation



Governor Roy Cooper has proclaimed February as Prescribed Fire Awareness Month in North Carolina. Today, prescribed fire is an established management tool, benefiting the forest and fire-dependent ecosystems by mimicking the frequent, low intensity fires that once occurred on the landscape.



[Governor Cooper's Proclamation!](#)

2022 NWCG IRPG Now Available!



The guide provides critical information on operational engagement, risk management, fire environment, all hazard response, and aviation management. It is a collection of guidelines, checklists, and best practices that have evolved over time within wildland fire operations.



[Click Here for More Information!](#)

NC Forest Service Announces New Cost Share Program



Cost share reimbursement through the N.C. Prescribed Burning Matching Program is available to private landowners in North Carolina. Eligible prescribed burning practices include silvicultural burning, hazard reduction burning and wildlife habitat burning. Applications for cost share funding will be accepted on a "first come, first served" basis.



[Click Here for More Information!](#)

Plants on Fire - *Fire on the Mountain*

News reports last December during the first days of the Grindstone Fire on Pilot Mountain were dire, claiming “devastation” and such. After containment of the 1,050-acre wildfire, the smoke cleared and news sources posted reports from NC Park Service staff, professional foresters, NC State professors, ecologists, and even from the Governor, that this fire was far from devastating but restorative. Governor Cooper told a group of reporters after he toured the still smoldering site: “The mountain will quickly come back to life – Nature is resilient.” But this is not news for most of the folks reading this newsletter!

This was certainly not the first time Pilot Mountain burned and will not be the last. There is a long history of naturally occurring fires, prescribed fires, incidental fires, and wildfires on the mountain and surroundings. And in our current transition through climate change into periods of severe drought, we can expect ecosystems already “built to burn” doing so more often.

The plant communities on Pilot Mountain were indeed built to burn. Their life histories were shaped by fire over millions of years. This suite of fire-adapted plants have deep rootstocks, fire-resistant bark, seeds that actually require heat and/or smoke to germinate, prefer bare mineral soil for germination, and are often shade-intolerant.

Two favorites of mine - Table Mountain Pine (*Pinus pungens*) and Pitch Pine (*P. rigida*) - have cones sealed tight with resins until sufficient heat causes them to open. These *serotinous* cones - from the Latin *sero*, meaning “late” – refer to delayed cone opening that creates an aerial seed bank awaiting a fire. After opening, seeds helicopter down and often find a beautifully prepared seedbed with supplemental nutrients provided by the ash. If they’re lucky – the seeds will find their way to a gap created by the fire where they don’t have to compete with their mom for space and light.

Another favorite tree ringing the top of the pinnacle is the shrubby Bear Oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*), so-called because of its *Ilex* or holly-like leaves. The common name comes from the supposition that only bears will eat the particularly bitter acorns.

Bear oak is often top-killed by a hot fire, but its incredibly deep tap root and fire-tolerant crown enable prolific re-sprouting that can form huge colonies. Individual stems might not be particularly old, but the colony/rootstock can age into the hundreds of years. And given that Pilot Mountain and other Piedmont monadnocks are maybe as old as any mountains on earth, I will boldly speculate that the regularly re-sprouting bear oaks might be many hundreds or even thousands of years old.

Small stature shrubby oaks, like Bear Oak, comprise half of the world-wide oak species and predominate in the arid regions of the northern hemisphere. Lots of shrubby (and evergreen) oaks occur in the southwestern US and Mexico, where they are particularly well diversified. And speaking of oaks and diversification – the 2022 Darwin Day talk at the North Carolina Botanical Garden was given by oak expert, Paul Manos of Duke University, entitled ***Quercus* Circus: The Biodiversity and Ecological Value of Oaks**. This presentation is archived for your viewing pleasure. Search for it at www.ncbg.unc.edu.

With the work of the North Carolina and other state Prescribed Fire Councils, many of those plant communities that are built to burn benefit from prescribed fire. And with global climate change already affecting rainfall patterns and temperature extremes, we need to burn with perhaps greater frequency when conditions allow.

Article written by Dr. Johnny Randall, Lifetime Spark Member

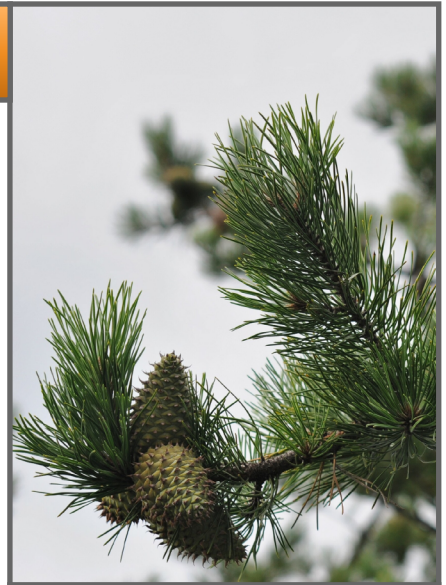


Photo by: Johnny Randall



Photo by: Johnny Randall



CC-BY-2.0 Bruce Kirchoff,
Photo by Rebecca
Dellinger-Johnson

I Have a Burning Question...

Can You Identify This Plant?



Photo by Dr. Johnny Randall

Hint: It was featured in one of our past newsletters!

Answers will be posted in the next edition!

Featured Photo



"It looks shorter from down here..."

Photo from Kayci Willis taken at 2021 Grindstone Wildfire at Pilot Mountain

On the inside of a fire hydrant you'll find H₂O. What do you find on the outside? - K9P

Photos

We see your smoke, show us your fire!

Submit your photos of sooty selfies, flaring flames, fun fire effects, or fire loving species for a chance at being featured in the future.

Please make sure the photo is of quality resolution.



Submit Your Photo Here!

If unable to access the link, email your photo to the editor at kdwill13@ncsu.edu

How do fire behavior and fuel consumption vary between dormant and early growing season prescribed burns in the southern Appalachian Mountains?

Matthew C. Vaughan, Donald L. Hagan, William C. Bridges Jr, Matthew B. Dickenson, & T. Adam Coates

Despite the widespread use of prescribed fire throughout much of the southeastern USA, temporal considerations of fire behavior and its effects often remain unclear. Opportunities to burn within prescriptive meteorological windows vary seasonally and along biogeographical gradients, particularly in mountainous terrain where topography can alter fire behavior. Managers often seek to expand the number of burn days available to accomplish their management objectives, such as hazardous fuel reduction, control of less desired vegetation, and wildlife habitat establishment and maintenance. For this study, we compared prescribed burns conducted in the dormant and early growing seasons in the southern Appalachian Mountains to evaluate how burn outcomes may be affected by environmental factors related to season of burn. The early growing season was defined as the narrow phenological window between bud break and full leaf-out. Proportion of plot area burned, surface fuel consumption, and time-integrated thermocouple heating were quantified and evaluated to determine potential relationships with fuel moisture and topographic and meteorological variables.



[Click Here for Full Article](#)

Exposure to fire affects acorn removal by altering consumer preference

C. Moriah Boggess, Carolina Baruzzi, Heather D. Alexander, Bronson K. Strickland, Marcus A. Lashley

Prescribed fire has been encouraged as a management tool to increase oak regeneration across the southeastern United States. The least utilized part of the burn window in this region is during fall, but burning in this season with the objective of oak regeneration has been discouraged because of the potential negative consequences on subsequent germination. While exposure to fire decreases acorn viability, acorns cached in recently burned areas increase their survival. By following the fate of unburned acorns added to those areas, previous studies identified post-fire habitat characteristics (e.g., altering vegetation structure, decreased leaf litter, etc.) as a cause of increased acorn establishment success. However, exposing acorns to fire may also contribute to fate of surviving acorns by changing consumer removal rates. We exposed acorns to fire and established cafeteria-style experiments in unburned forests to compare burned and unburned acorn selection and removal rate of eight oak species by caching and non-caching consumers (i.e., predator type). Exposing acorns to fire did not appear to affect selection of oak species but affected overall removal risk for acorns differently by species of consumers. For example, while one important non-caching consumer (white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*) and caching consumer (southern flying squirrel, *Glaucomys Volans*) showed strong selection of burned acorns, other important consumers in each predator type showed little discrimination or strong selection of unburned acorns (e.g., southern fox squirrel *Sciurus niger*). Exposure to fire reduced the overall rate of removal of acorns and when an acorn was removed, fire significantly reduced the probability that it would be removed by a caching consumer. Overall, our experiment demonstrates that shifts in consumer removal for exposed acorns may play an important role in the net effects of fall burning on oak regeneration.



[Click Here for Full Article](#)

Recognition of 2021 Awards

NC Prescribed Burner of the Year Award

Jon Blanchard's leadership within the NC Division of Parks and Recreation in resource management has moved the needle in a positive direction for prescribed fire. In addition to his active participation on the PFC for years, Jon has grown NC State Park's burn program and enthusiastically delivered the prescribed fire message to the public and to State leadership.



State Forester's Prescribed Burner of the Year Award

The State Forester's Prescribed Burning Award is presented to an individual or team that demonstrates leadership and excellence in prescribed burning. The 2021 recipient of this award, **Keith Money** exemplifies these attributes. Keith has been a prescribed burning advocate over his entire career. He's a leader in the field and continues to work towards moving the needle on applying fire to landscape in a sound and sustainable manner.

North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission Prescribed Burning Award

Morganton LAWA Crew: Jason Creegan (Crew Lead), Zach Scott, Brandon Bridges, and Corey Patton. Some of their highlights from this past burning season included members of crew assisting with 14 RX burns totaling more than 2,500 acres. Of which they served as burn boss for 5 burns totaling nearly 200 acres. Additionally, the crew cleared nearly 11 miles of firebreak in their work area and assisted with another 2 miles of firebreak outside their work area on the Lake James burn on the Grandfather RD of Pisgah NF.

Longleaf Coalition Illustris Pallustris Award

Jeff Marcus, who leads TNC's Longleaf restoration, recently received the NC Longleaf Coalition's Illustris Pallustris award, recognizing an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the maintenance and restoration of North Carolina's longleaf pine forests.

<https://www.nclongleaf.org/awards.html>



Hall of Flame - Member Highlight

Photo by Sharon Bischof



Congratulations to Jon Blanchard on his retirement!

Jon Blanchard (Lifetime Spark Member) has been a pillar of the fire community for years, serving on the prescribed fire council board several times, participating in ad hoc committees, and being the leader of fire management for the North Carolina State Parks System.

His work began in Florida after grad school, working for the Florida Forest Service, Natural Areas Inventory, and later The Nature Conservancy. He then moved to North Carolina and began his work with the NC State Parks System where he revolutionized the burn program. Jon facilitated partnerships and training opportunities to promote prescribed fire across NC. His work grew the NC State Park's fire implementation from a few hundred acres a year to several thousand.

One notable success, consistently referenced by his peers to this day, was Jon's handling of the escape at Pilot Mountain State Park, after which he vigorously maintained the viability of the Park's fire program and successfully translated scrutiny into lessons learned.

On top of his success as a land manager, Jon is widely regarded as a respectable people manager. He has mentored and guided many "young grasshoppers" in the natural resources field. His charismatic, humorous, sarcastic, and good-natured personality made working with him fun!

Jon, thank you for your stewardship and leadership. We hope you enjoy your retirement!



[Jon's Blanchard's LinkedIn](#)



[Jon Blanchard's Kudos Board](#)

Article written by Kayci Willis

Know someone you think deserves to be highlighted in our newsletter?

Let Us Know!

We want to showcase the work our members do and are implementing new Member Highlights!

Nominate someone to potentially be featured in our next newsletter. It can be you or someone you know, so long as they are a member.

If they aren't a member, convince them to become one!

Nominees will be selected at random from the pool of candidates and contacted via email to arrange an interview. Please ensure correct information is submitted into the form below.

We look forward to talking with members of our community!



Submit Nomination Here!

Being Part of the Fire Community

As a member, your benefits include:

- Discounted annual meeting registration
- Discounted Council field trips
- Eligibility to vote
- Prescribed Fire Council Newsletters
- Email communications regarding fire related postings and events
- Supporting the NC Prescribed Fire Council's mission



Renew your membership, become a lifetime member, or gift a membership today at:



Membership Form

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

- \$15 a year
- Access to all membership benefits
- No qualifications required!
- Must renew each year!

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

- \$25 for 4 year membership!
- Limited to undergraduate and graduate students
- Offer available even if you graduate before 4 years!
- Must have valid .edu email

SPARK MEMBERSHIP

- One time fee of \$150
- Lifetime membership!
- No qualifications required!
- No renewals!

The calendar year for the NC Prescribed Fire Council begins August 1 each year. Therefore, annual membership dues should be paid in August or September to keep receiving membership benefits.

For More Information about Membership:

Reach out to our Membership Committee Chair, John Ann Shearer at johnann_shearer@fws.gov

Don't Get Lost! If you're moving or changing your email address, please let us know.

Send your contact information to: admin@ncprescribedfirecouncil.org

Lifetime Spark Members

Sparks dare to ignite & make a positive impact!

Jason Allen	Patrick Farrell	Shane Paxton
Janice Allen	Jennifer Fawcett	Jason Payne
Thomas Ammons	Jeff Fisher	Greg Philipp
David Andres	Matthew Flint	Scott Pohlman
Andrew Bailey	Preston Floyd	Brandon Price
Chris Baranski	Carla Freeman	Johnny Randall
Dwight Batts	Cecil Frost	Barbara Rhoads
Brady Beck	Randy Gillen	Wilson Ricks
Pete Benjamin	Gary Gilreath	Don Riley
Jon Blanchard	James Gray	Christa Rogers
Ryan Bollinger	James Gregory	James Rogers
John Bratton	Kenny Griffin	Joe Roise
Kenneth Bridle	Matthew Harrell	Monica Rother
Clinton Brooks	John Henry Harrelson	Will Ruark
Margit Bucher	Jonathan Hartsell	Terry Sharpe
Chet Buell	Kevin Harvell	John Ann Shearer
Rachel Burnett	James Hunsucker	Dean Simon
Peter Campbell	John Isenhour	David Smith
Richard Clark	Bill Jackson	Ryan Smith
Crystal Cockman	Katie Jones	David Sprunt
Thomas Crate	Jason Kiker	Donnie Stafford
Thomas Crews	Wally King	Jeff Stewart
Gary Curcio	Robert King	Johnny Stowe
Chance Curnutte	Jeff Marcus	Jackie Trickle
Dub Davis	Jonathan McCall	Chris Turner
Chris Dawes	Mark Megalos	Cynthia Van Der Wiele
Paul Dean	Chris Moorman	Phil Wallace
Jimmy Dodson	Jack Muncy	Seth Ward
Kelly Douglass	Andrew Mynatt	Cierra Ward
David DuMond	Wib Owen	Jesse Wimberley
Dillon Epp	Randall Patterson	Gary Wood

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