



***Synopsis of the
2015 Prescribed Fire
Conference***

Conference Overview:

The 2015 Prescribed Fire Conference was the third annual conference for individuals interested in prescribed burning within the state of Nebraska and in association with people from surrounding states. The all-day conference was held in Kearney, NE on December 1, 2015 which hosted two excellent presenters, John Weir and Dirac Twidwell, and five interactive breakout session topics. Conference attendees arrived with varying backgrounds and experiences, but with an overall goal of presenting topics and questions associated with prescribed burning as a vegetation, habitat, and ecosystem management tool. The conference brought together **145** individuals from across Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma, with **75** individuals attending the conference for the first time and **70** individuals who have attended previous years. **21** different organizations including federal, state, and local agencies were represented at the conference; along with **7** prescribed burn associations, **2** volunteer fire departments, **7** businesses, **3** academic universities, and most importantly, a diversified group of landowners from across the state.

The morning was filled with greetings and salutations from existing friendships and introductions of possible future colleagues. The conference began with a rousing speech from Scott Stout a local burn boss, landowner, and president of the NPFC. John Weir was the first speaker of the day who presented a captivating presentation on “The Benefits of a State Burn Alliance and the Experiences from Other States”. Following him was another intriguing presentation from Dirac Twidwell on how “Applying the Science of Fire to Confront Challenges Facing Prescribed Burners”.

The afternoon was filled with anticipation and excitement as conference attendees separated into small groups and engaged in in-depth conversations with selected panelists who helped guide the conversations of five focused topics related to prescribed burning in four rounds of breakout sessions. Topics of discussion, where questions and individual input were highly encouraged, included “Bringing Prescribed Burners Together”, “Financial and Technical Assistance for Prescribed Fire”, “Fire Research Needs”, “Insurance and Liability of Fire”, and “Training Opportunities and Needs”. The number one favored breakout session was on the “Insurance and Liability of Fire” topic at 36.4% with “Bringing Prescribed Burners Together” and “Training Opportunities and Needs” topics tying for a close second at 22.7% based upon responses to the conference evaluation form.

Conference attendees were able to participate in an interactive experience that was introduced this year, *The NPFC Passbook*, an incentive based activity to promote the interaction between conference attendees and the gracious organizations and businesses sponsoring the conference. With the completion of *The NPFC Passbook* conference attendees received a complementary gift bag full of NPFC merchandise and were entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of three grand prizes. Winner of the Pheasants Forever Browning Silver Hunter 12-Gauge Shotgun was Caleb Roberts from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Winner of the Traeger Lil’ Tex Grill was Lin Jeffres a landowner from Byron, NE. The final winner of the evening was Christine Bielski from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln who took home a \$150 Beef Draft Certificate redeemable at any Nebraska grocery store or meat locker where proceeds help local farmers, ranchers, and beef industry.

The conference seemed to have an impressive impact with an overall 95.5% for expectations met and conference satisfaction or higher rating from those who attended the conference and completed an evaluation form. This year marked the debut of the Nebraska

Prescribed Fire Council, the establishment of the Board of Directors, and the 1st Annual NPFC Meeting.

Conference Representation:

The 2015 Prescribed Fire Conference was the gathering point of a multitude of individuals with vastly diversified backgrounds along with representing numerous organizations. The following table depicts the variety of organizations/groups and the number of representatives from each organization/group that attended the conference.

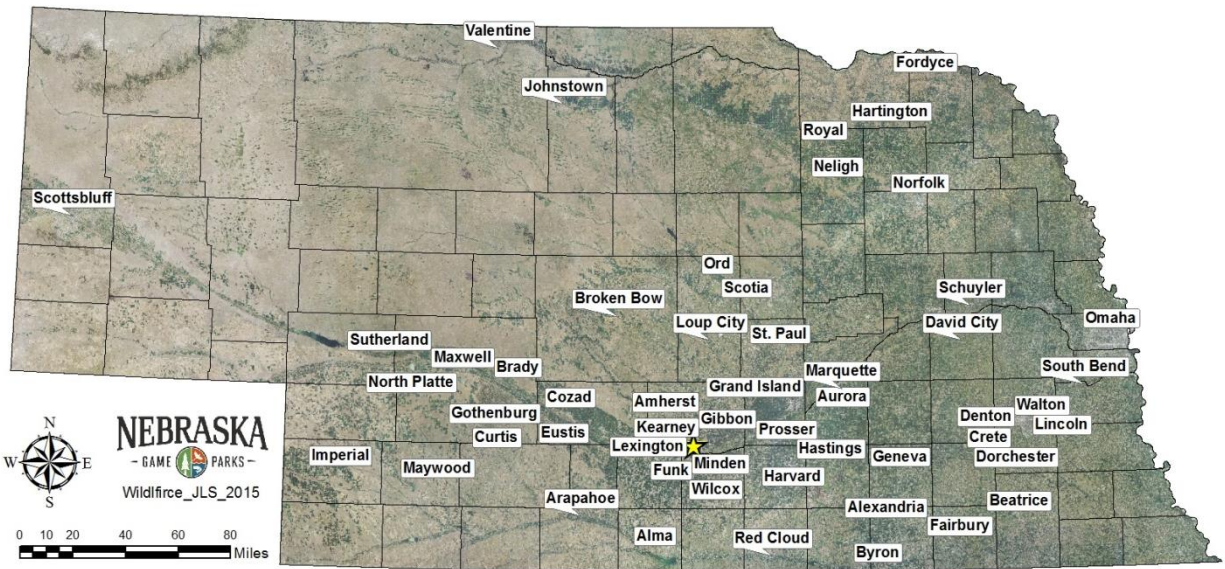
State and Federal Organizations	# People	PBA's/VFD/Landowners	# People
Central Nebraska Public Power	1	Central Nebraska PBA	2
Crane Trust	1	Central Platte Rangeland Alliance	2
Great Plains Fire Science Exchange	1	Elkhorn Valley PBA	1
Kansas Forest Service	1	Fairbury Fire Department	1
Kansas Livestock Association	2	Landowner	9
Kansas Prescribed Fire Council	1	Loess Canyon Rangeland Alliance	20
National Audubon Society	1	Northeast PBA	3
National Wild Turkey Federation	1	Tri County PBA	3
NE Board of Educational Lands and Funds	1	Upper Medicine Creek PBA	1
NE Master Naturalist	1	Wood River Fire Department	2
NE Sandhills Task Force	1	PBA/VFD/Landowner Total	44
Nebraska Environmental Trust	1	Businesses	# People
Nebraska Forest Service	3	Chloeta Fire	1
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission	30	Crete Lumber & Farm Supply Co.	1
NRCS	10	Firestorm WFS Inc.	1
Pheasants Forever	14	Horizon Ag Inc.	3
Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Society	1	Jinx Cattle	2
The Nature Conservancy	3	Prescribed Fire Planning of NE, LLC	1
U.S. Senator Deb Fischer Rep.	1	Working Ecosystems, LLC	1
USFWS Partners Program	5	Business Total	10
Wachiska Audubon Prairie Conservation Committee	1	Universities	# People
Organization Total	81	Oklahoma State University	2
		University of Nebraska-Kearney	1
		University of Nebraska-Lincoln	7
		University Rep Total	10

Attendee Distribution:

There was a strong representation of Nebraskans from all throughout the state with 136 individuals. There were also 5 individuals from Kansas, 3 individuals from Oklahoma, and 1 individual from Missouri. The following table represents the distribution and the number of individuals from each city and state that attended the meeting.

City/Town	State	Number of Representatives	City/Town	State	Number of Representatives
Alexandria	NE	1	Johnstown	NE	1
Alma	NE	1	Kearney	NE	7
Amherst	NE	1	Lexington	NE	1
Arapahoe	NE	1	Lincoln	NE	22
Aurora	NE	4	Loup City	NE	1
Beatrice	NE	5	Marquette	NE	1
Brady	NE	1	Maxwell	NE	1
Broken Bow	NE	1	Maywood	NE	4
Bucklin	KS	2	Minden	NE	3
Byron	NE	1	Neligh	NE	1
Cozad	NE	3	Norfolk	NE	1
Crete	NE	1	North Platte	NE	8
Curtis	NE	12	Omaha	NE	1
Dauphar	NE	1	Ord	NE	1
David City	NE	1	Prosser	NE	1
Davis	OK	1	Red Bluff	NE	1
Denton	NE	1	Red Cloud	NE	2
Dorchester	NE	1	Royal	NE	2
Edmond	OK	1	Schuyler	NE	1
Eustis	NE	3	Scotia	NE	1
Fairbury	NE	2	Scottsbluff	NE	1
Fordyce	NE	1	South Bend	NE	1
Funk	NE	3	Springfield	MO	1
Geneva	NE	1	St. Paul	NE	1
Gibbon	NE	1	Stillwater	OK	1
Gothenburg	NE	3	Sutherland	NE	1
Grand Island	NE	1	Unknown	NE	4
Hartington	NE	2	Valentine	NE	1
Harvard	NE	1	Walton	NE	1
Hastings	NE	2	Wamego	KS	1
Hays	KS	1	Wayne	NE	1
Hebron	NE	1	Wilcox	NE	1
Hutchinson	KS	1	Wood River	NE	4
Imperial	NE	2	Grand Total		145

The following map provides a visual prospective of the location distribution/range of individuals from Nebraska that attended the conference. The conference location, Kearney, is represented by a yellow star to help provide visualization of the distances individuals traveled to attend the conference.



The 1st Annual Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council Annual Meeting

The Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council (NPFC) was formed by landowners for the purpose of promoting the common good and general welfare of the people in Nebraska by educating, training, and practicing safe prescribed burn techniques that reduce or eliminate invasive species and fuel load build-up in open spaces, providing fire protection and/or prevention from wild or unexpected fires in and near these burned open places. The council originated from the voiced concerns from landowners, prescribed burn associations, conservation agencies, and other individuals/Organizations who want to increase the use of prescribed burning as a valuable land management practices and have the ability for state recognition. The NPFC would also provide landowners and prescribed burn associations access to organizational technical assistance and advocacy.

Conference attendees were introduced to the background history of why the NPFC was formed and what the council hopes to achieve with the involvement of incoming members. The Board of Directors was established from the initial organizational committee, composing of 7 landowners and 6 agency representatives serving as advisory members. Officers of the Board of Directors were announced as follows: President-Scott Stout; Vice-President-Denny Oelschlager; Treasurer-Harlan Grunden; and Secretary-Dale Ruehling. The broad scope of the council’s by-laws was presented with an available copy for every conference attendee for review. Those who attended the 1st Annual NPFC Meeting were invited to join NPFC as annual members under three possible membership options:

- **PBA Membership-** PBA membership is for individuals who are part of a recognized Nebraska Prescribed Burn Association that use prescribed fire as a natural resources management tool. PBA's must submit a list of members and a description of their natural resources management activities including planning and conducting prescribed burns.
- **Individual Membership-** Individuals who own or manage private land and utilize prescribe fire as a natural resources management tool. -OR- Volunteers who have assisted on not less than six (6) prescribed fires while assisting groups, cooperatives, and organizations formed for the purposes that include prescribed fire as a natural resources management tool.
- **Advisory Membership-** An organization or person who has made a substantial contribution to the furtherance of the activities of NPFC is eligible to be an Advisory Member. Advisory members are entitled to the same privileges as PBA and Individual members with the exception of the right to vote.

Following the introduction of the Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council and availability of membership to conference attendees, the council proceeded with the introduction of the standing committees that will help achieve the goals, operations, and purpose of the NPFC. Participation by conference attendees to consider involvement in one or more committees was strongly encouraged in hopes of staying on course of accomplishing achievements. The concepts and questions from the breakout topic sessions were used as a foundation to build and mold goals for each one of the standing committees. The following list provides an oversight of the committees established and their associated goals:

- **Education/Research-** Public outreach, website, promotional materials summarize research that is occurring; develop research needs based on questions or concerns of the council.
- **Risk Management-** Promote and educate policy makers on the role of fire, liability, and insurance.
- **Training-** Develops training for landowners, agencies, and fire departments.
- **Membership-** Recruits members, tracks membership, etc.
- **Fundraising-** Develop information on funding sources for the Council activities and prescribed fire associations.

The Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council will continue meet periodically throughout the year and work towards achieving the goals established during the 3rd Annual Prescribed Fire Conference. Membership enrollment and committee involvement will be the immediate short term goal, while working towards the overall purpose of the NPFC. The NPFC will strive to provide an outlet for prescribed fire practitioners to exchange ideas within the state, regionally, and nationally. Initiate involvement with other state's burn associations. Provide advocacy for prescribed fire practitioners including policy, legislation, and liability changes. Most importantly they will help increase knowledge of safe fire practices through research, training, and outreach.

Conference Presentations: The conference was gratefully blessed with the presentations from John Weir and Dirac Twidwell and their associated presentations may be found at:

<http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/NebRxBurn>.

Conference Sponsors: A gracious thank you is in order for the organizations that helped sponsor the 2015 Prescribed Fire Conference.

Conference Underwriters:

Pheasants Forever	<i>Brian Teeter</i>	bteeter@pheasantsforever.org	402-219-2572
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Refreshment Sponsors:

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Thank You for a Great Conference

