

Prescribed Fire Experiential Training Opportunities in the Great Plains — Spring 2017

The number and type of opportunities for experiential training in prescribed fire has been increasing significantly throughout the Great Plains. Below is a listing of events being planned for the coming spring. It includes all of the Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TRES) events across this wide geographic area, as well as other inter-organizational cooperative burns that have strong training components.

EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Loup River Prescribed Fire Training Exchange*

March 13-25

This TRES will occur on private ranch lands near Burwell, NE with a goal of achieving 3800 acres of prescribed fire across multiple units and ownerships. These fires are designed to benefit native grassland wildlife such as the greater prairie chicken by discouraging woody encroachment into grasslands. The target audience includes local VFDs and landowners, as well as national and international participants from various agencies and conservation organizations. Financial assistance for lodging and meals during this TRES is available thanks to support from the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture and Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund.



Ben Wheeler (ben.wheeler@nebraska.gov)

Northeast Oklahoma Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

March 13-17

The Grand River Dam Authority, Great Plains Fire Science Exchange and Chloeta Fire will offer experiential learning opportunities in prescribed fire planning, preparation and implementation on grassland and woodland units in northeast Oklahoma. Volunteer firefighters, college students, private landowners and tribal members who are interested in learning more about using prescribed fire as a land management tool are invited to take part in this TRES.



Mark Masters (mmasters@chloetafire.com)

Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/myevent?eid=29086926781>

Niobrara Valley Preserve Prescribed Fire Training Exchange*

March 18-April 2

This TRES is timed to coordinate with university spring breaks, and participation from college students enrolled in fire or natural resources management curricula is encouraged. It will host about 40 participants, with a goal of burning more than 5,000 acres in north-central Nebraska, including the Niobrara Valley Preserve (The Nature Conservancy), Fort Niobrara/Valentine National Wildlife Refuge Complex (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) and private lands. TNC staff also plan to host cooperative burns with regional partners in April, on the Preserve and including cross-boundary burns with neighbors.



Rich Walters (rwalters@tnc.org)

Evan Suhr

Chad Bladow

Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week*

March 20-24

Organized and led by the Loess Hills Fire Partners, this event will be focused on the central Loess Hills region of western Iowa, including the Loess Hills State Forest. Burn units on private, state and county ownerships are being planned and are designed to improve tallgrass prairie habitat by reducing encroaching brush and eastern redcedar. This event will focus on building local fire capacity through strengthening regional partnerships with state, federal, non-profit, VFD and private landowner partners, but additional participation from other regions will be sought to provide new perspectives and insights to the Loess Hills. Lodging and some meals will be provided. (Rain dates are March 27-31.)

*LOESS HILLS
FIRE PARTNERS*

Emily Hohman (ehohman@tnc.org)

Kansas Forest Service Hazardous Fuels Mitigation Project

March 26 – April 1

This event provides hands-on training opportunities for fire professionals and students while also bringing together the labor force needed to conduct prescribed burns and mechanical fuels reduction in areas of the state with elevated wildfire risk. Kansas Forest Service is partnering with Hutchinson Community College to provide hands-on fire experience for students in the fire science program. The primary location for the event is the Quivira Boy Scout Ranch (central Chautauqua County, KS) although opportunities for prescribed fire, fuels reduction, training and wildfire response in the surrounding area are possible. The event staffs a full Type 3 team, and in the past has also assisted with wildfire response, including on the 2016 Anderson Creek Fire.



Jason Hartman, Kansas Forest Service (hartmanj@ksu.edu)

East River Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

May

Hosted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Great Plains Fire Management Zone, this TREX will cover the full month of May this year. It will provide training opportunities for seven modules (about 100 participants total). The 2016 TREX provided training opportunities for 38 RXB2s and 70 ENGB & FIRB task books. Organizers are planning to burn 200 units (more than 20,000 acres) in eastern and central South Dakota. Applications for the month event will be sent out in late December. Check out the Great Plains Fire Facebook page (Great Plains Fire Management Zone) or Twitter (@FWSGreatPlains) for updates and application information.

(The USFWS Great Plains Zone will also work with partners to host two other TREX events in Nebraska in March—the Niobrara Valley Preserve TREX (led by The Nature Conservancy) and a new TREX with the Nebraska National Forest in central Nebraska.)



Information: fw6_greatplainsfirezone@fws.gov

The Nature Conservancy in Texas—Wildfire Scenarios

(winter)

TNC holds annual wildfire scenarios for Type 5 IC trainees and Type 6 and 7 engine crews. Held during the winter months, all scenarios are conducted in burn units prepped with black line perimeters for safety. A simulated wildfire is then set and trainees respond to a “dispatch” call, establish command, develop and implement suppression tactics, and coordinate incoming resources. Other scenarios simulate multiple spot fires that engine crews must quickly suppress with pump and roll tactics. These scenarios provide Type 5 IC and Engine Boss trainees hands-on wildfire response experience in a controlled environment to improve initial attack and command skills in the fast-moving tall grass fuels typical of the coastal plains near Victoria.



John DeLeon (jdeleon@tnc.org)

Doane University Training Burns

(various dates)

Burns are conducted with private land owners and managers in the Crete / Lincoln, NE areas with the goal of providing training to landowners, volunteers and students who want to increase their experience with prescribed fire, especially so that they can burn their own land or assist others. Lead Brad Elder acts as an advisor and line boss while the landowner or manager serves as burn boss. Most crew members are retirees or students (mainly from University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Doane University) with little or no fire experience; a special emphasis is placed on providing hands-on training for these individuals during a burn operation. NWCG training courses are not required to participate in these trainings, so they provide a straightforward means for private landowners and students to gain experience.



Brad Elder (brad.elder@doane.edu)

The Nature Conservancy in Missouri—Student Burn Crew Member Volunteers (various dates)

In a 2016 pilot, two groups of students from the Colorado State University and Missouri State University SAFE chapters were able to integrate into TNC burn crews and gain hands-on experience with burn unit prep and prescribed fire implementation; burn projects included a first-entry burn in a glade and oak/shortleaf pine woodland and other oak/shortleaf burns with partners. The Missouri Program was able to welcome about six students at a time to work with their seasonal burn crews, and plans to host participants again this spring.



Tom Fielden (thomas.fielden@tnc.org)



For general questions about prescribed fire training in the Great Plains, contact:

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* Prescribed Fire Training Exchange or cooperative burning event supported in part by the Fire Learning Network, which is part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior.

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