

Training Opportunities for Landowners

Training in the use of prescribed fire is available to private landowners from a number of agencies. The U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides prescribed fire training for landowners. Contact the NRCS office in your county for information. Several Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) provide periodic orientation and training in wildlife habitat management, including the use of prescribed fire as an important habitat management tool. This training helps landowners understand the basic concepts of prescribed fire and how it is used to accomplish specific habitat management objectives. Contact the following WMAs for information about training opportunities.

- SOUTH TEXAS: Chaparral WMA in Dimmit and La Salle counties. (830) 676-3413
- CENTRAL TEXAS: Kerr WMA in Kerr County. (830) 238-4483
- PANHANDLE: Matador WMA in Cottle County. (806) 492-3405
- GULF COAST: J.D. Murphree WMA in Jefferson County. (409) 736-2551



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Prescribed Burning Associations IN TEXAS



ALAN CAIN, TPWD

What is a Prescribed Burn?

A prescribed burn is the planned and deliberate application of fire as a management tool for land stewardship. Unlike wildfires, prescribed burns are conducted under predetermined environmental conditions to achieve specific resource management goals and objectives. Wildfires can occur any time fuels will burn and often under very hazardous conditions. But with prescribed burning, conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind speed, fuel moisture and condition of vegetation are carefully selected to ensure a safe and effective burn designed to maximize desired benefits. Precautions, such as adequate firebreaks and fire control equipment, are taken to ensure that the fire burns only within the predetermined area to be treated.

Fire plays an important role in most ecosystems and is a vital component of ecosystem function. Because fire was a natural factor on most Texas rangelands and forestlands before European settlement, native vegetation and wildlife are well adapted to burning. Fire effectively suppresses many woody plant species while encouraging grass and forb growth beneficial to livestock and wildlife. Sound range, livestock and wildlife management must accompany the use of fire for maximum benefits to be realized.



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Prescribed burning is most often used to accomplish objectives such as:

- Increase production of desired grasses, forbs and woody plants
- Improve watershed function resulting in increased water quantity and quality
- Suppression and management of woody species, cacti and invasive plants
- Improve forage and browse quality and/or palatability
- Increase availability of desirable forage and browse plants
- Achieve desired composition of grasses, forbs and woody plants
- Provide for better grazing distribution of livestock
- Improve animal performance and achieve control of certain parasites and pests
- Enhance nutrient cycling
- Removal of “thatch” or vegetation accumulation
- Reduce hazardous fuel loads
- Improve wildlife habitat

Each management objective requires a particular set of conditions for burning and a specific type of fire to achieve the desired response. Objectives should be carefully evaluated in order to develop a fire plan that will achieve the desired results.

What is a Prescribed Burning Association?

Prescribed burning associations are organized landowner cooperatives that are user owned, controlled and operated. Burn associations share knowledge, experience and equipment among contributing members to increase the application and safety of prescribed fire as a management tool. A prescribed burning association can significantly reduce risks through increased experience, knowledge and available resources. Experience has shown that locally run burn associations are more efficient in accomplishing prescribed burns because they can organize the required labor and support quickly within the often narrow window of desired weather conditions.

What can a Prescribed Burning Association do for you?

Prescribed burning is often recommended by wildlife biologists and range management specialists assisting landowners throughout Texas. Many landowners understand the benefits of prescribed fire but don't have the experience or confidence to carry out the practice without technical help. Agency personnel assisting landowners are unable to meet the demand for the on-site technical assistance required to



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implement effective prescribed burning throughout the state. By working with groups of landowners and providing initial training and support, agencies can help more landowners accomplish their individual range and habitat management goals. Important landowner benefits include:

- Support of a locally led and run organization of neighbors helping neighbors
- Reduced costs of fire management
- Reduced risk through increased experience, equipment, training and technical assistance
- Community support and assistance
- Ability to get more prescribed burning done on your land and the satisfaction of helping your neighbors do the same

Agencies and Organizations in Texas

Providing Technical Assistance (TA), Cost-Share Assistance (CS) and Training (T)

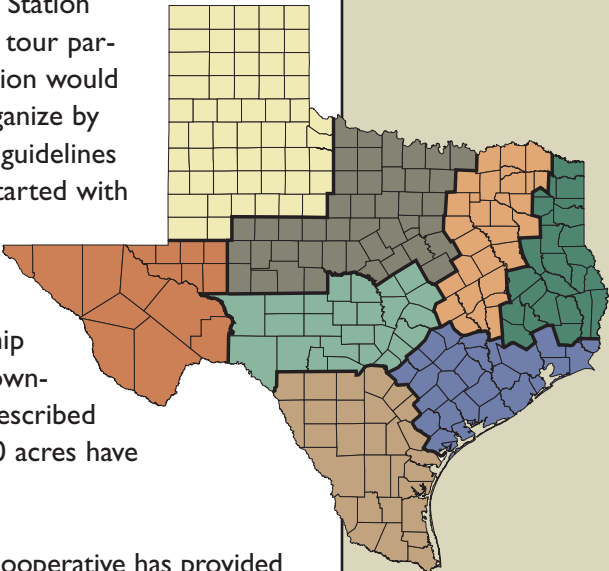
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts – TA, T
- Texas Cooperative Extension – TA, T
- Texas Forest Service – TA, CS, T
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – TA, CS, T
- The Nature Conservancy of Texas – TA, T
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – TA, CS, T
- U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service – TA, CS, T

It's Working!

The Edwards Plateau Prescribed Burning Association formed after a prescribed burn tour was held at the Texas A&M University Research Station near Sonora, Texas, in 1997. The tour participants agreed that an association would be beneficial and decided to organize by electing officers and developing guidelines for operation. The association started with 30 members but quickly grew to 60 members within the first year. Originally formed to serve three counties, membership has increased to over 500 landowners in 20 counties. Over 600 prescribed burns on approximately 500,000 acres have been completed since 1997.

This neighbor-helping-neighbor cooperative has provided the resources, education, encouragement and empowerment necessary to help restore fire on a sustained basis. The hands-on approach has built an experienced community labor force and a critical mass of like-minded people who can collectively influence the attitudes of their community. Members are encouraged to attend prescribed burning schools and actively participate in as many burns as possible. Ranchers must develop a burn plan for review by the association, are responsible for preparing their fire lines and serve as the fire boss for burns on their property. Members pay \$25 per year in dues, which are used to purchase, repair and maintain equipment and support activities such as newsletters. Members are expected to actively participate in supporting each other. Since 1997, a number of prescribed burning associations have formed throughout the state.

For more information, contact your local U.S.D.A., County Extension or TPWD office.



TPWD Wildlife District Offices

Canyon	(806) 655-3782/3975
Alpine	(432) 837-2051
Kerrville	(830) 896-2500
Brownwood	(325) 643-5977
Tyler	(903) 566-1626
Jasper	(409) 384-6894
La Grange	(979) 968-6591
Pleasanton	(830) 569-8700

Help Available to Landowners

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
www.tpwd.state.tx.us

U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov

The Nature Conservancy of Texas
<http://nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/texas>

Texas Forest Service <http://texasforestservice.tamu.edu>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service www.fws.gov/fire

Texas Department of Agriculture www.agr.state.tx.us
(see Programs – Prescribed Burning Board)

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
www.tceq.state.tx.us

For a list of prescribed burning associations in Texas, visit the TPWD Web site at

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/burnassociations/