

CBPBA Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association

Serving the following Texas Counties: Aransas, Bee, Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Jackson, Karnes, Live Oak, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, and Victoria

Fall 2007 Newsletter

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Events Calendar

January 25, 2008

CBPBA

Burn School

1:00 PM 5:30 PM

Bee Co Expo Center

FMI 361-362-0430

January 25, 2008

CBPBA

Annual Meeting & Dinner

6:00 PM 8:00 PM

Bee Co Expo Center

FMI 361-362-0430

January 26, 2008

CBPBA

Demonstration Burn

10:00 AM Until ?

Mineral Area,
Bee County

ABOUT US

The CBPBA is a cooperative of landowners and interested parties that share manpower and resources to help each other burn on their properties. We conduct annual burn schools and work to encourage the use of prescribed burning in Texas.

BEE CO TO HOST CBPBA ANNUAL MEETING, BURN SCHOOL & DEMO BURN

We will hold a Burn School on January 25th at the Bee County Exposition Center. The school begins at 1:00 pm and will run until about 5:30. A social hour will follow immediately and our annual meeting and dinner will begin at 6:00 pm. The next day, Saturday, January 26th, we will conduct a 200 acre demo burn in the Mineral area just north of Beeville. Start time and maps to the burn location will be provided at the meeting the night before. CEU credits will be available.

Guest speaker will be Dr. Charles "Butch" Taylor from Sonora, Texas. Dr. Taylor is with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station and is nationally known for his work with prescribed fire.

Cost is \$25 for the 2 day school and includes dinner at the annual meeting and lunch on burn day. If you attend the annual meeting and not the school the price is still \$25. Dues are due January 1 and renewing members and new members can pay at the meeting. Dues are \$25 per year.

IS PRESCRIBED BURNING ECONOMICAL?

By Jason Hohlt, Rangeland Management Specialist, Kingsville, Texas



We parked our trucks under a bull mesquite next to headquarters and walked in the August sun to a small office where decisions were made on how this ranch was run. As we entered it was obvious there was a wealth of information in this little building. Books, charts, and files were within short reach of a small computer workstation. For two hours we discussed cattle, grazing, and how anyone could possibly make a living ranching in South Texas. The answer became obvious as we examined this rancher's success through both wet and dry years. It turned out he was a business man first, and a rancher second.

When deciding if prescribed fire is a tool that fits your operation you'll have to answer several questions. What are the effects of prescribed burning? How much does it cost to

FMI 361-362-0430

February 1 - 2, 2008

TOWMA Spring Meeting

Details to follow
Check the TOWMA website at
<http://www.towma.org>

FMI 361-362-0430

February 9, 2007

Bee County WMA Annual Meeting, Banquette & Fund Raiser

7:00 PM– 9:00 PM
Bee County Exposition Center
More details at
<http://www.bee-county-wildlife.org>

CBPBA MEMBERSHIP

Dues - \$25.00 per year. Income will purchase, repair, and maintain equipment and support activities such as meetings, newsletters and correspondence.

burn? What do alternative treatments cost?

When it comes the effects of prescribed burning, stick to documented research and avoid coffee shop talk. While most managers agree that wildlife habitat can be enhanced with fire, the effects of fire on brush are often debated. Prescribed burning, if intense enough, can cause developed mesquite and huisache trees to resprout from the base regardless of the time of year. Actual kill on any resprouting brush species is very rare. However, seedlings with undeveloped root crowns can be killed by fire. These plants are often so small you don't notice them in the pasture.

The cost of prescribed burning takes two forms: installation of fireguards and loss of grazing before and after the burn. Fireguard costs vary depending on the equipment available. If you own a tractor and disk, your cost will be relatively low. If you have to hire a maintainer, you'll have more cost. The loss of grazing is something every successful rancher should know backwards and forwards. To assign a cost to this you need to know how much profit you make per acre grazing livestock. To determine profit you have to know what your costs are to raise livestock. Feed, taxes, lease fees, medicine and vet bills, fuel, labor, and depreciation on the animals are all costs that eat into the bottom line. A reasonable estimate of the cost of burning around the Texas coastal bend area in 2007 could be \$4/acre for fireguard installation plus \$8/acre for grazing loss for a whole year.

When looking at alternatives, a good way to compare them is to divide the cost of the treatment by the expected lifetime of the treatment. For prescribed burning in the coastal bend, you could estimate \$12/acre divided by a 4 year life expectancy and end up spending \$3/acre per year to manage the brush canopy. Individual plant treatment with herbicides easily surpasses \$15/acre and many times are required more often than every 4 years. Aerially applied chemicals are close to \$50/ acre. If the aerial treatment lasted 10 years, you'd essentially be spending \$5/acre per year. If you really want to talk about things getting expensive, look at heavy equipment. If you roller chopped every four years for \$50/acre, you'd be spending \$12.50/acre per year. If you root plowed the brush every 20 years for \$200/acre, you'd be spending \$10/acre per year. If your profit per acre from livestock is \$6-8/acre, does it make business sense to spend more than that on brush management each year?

When you look at these potential brush management costs, it's clear that a conservative stocking rate with a prescribed burn program makes a lot of business sense. Would running 20% more cows make sense if your brush management costs tripled?

To start you may have to defer a pasture longer than planned. The number one reason a pasture doesn't burn well is too little grass in it. Pulling the cows out six weeks prior to burning doesn't cut the mustard. If you already have brush problems in the pasture, you may consider a light aerial application of herbicide to defoliate the brush during the growing season. This way you'll grow some grass fuel where there wasn't any before. A good fuel load when you light the match will help you top kill those trees that you couldn't have touched before. Whatever your plan may be, start with a good sharp pencil and make sure it makes business sense.

EFFECTS OF PRESCRIBED FIRE ON CATTLE AND WILDLIFE

By D. Lynn Drawe, PhD, a founding Director of CBPBA

Director, Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation, Sinton, TX

Prescribed burning is one of the most economical and beneficial habitat management tools available to landowners and benefits both livestock and wildlife. Fire used appropriately benefits wildlife populations. Fire does little damage to animal populations during winter when most plants are dormant and many species of wildlife are inactive; i.e., reptiles hibernating, rodents below ground, no nesting or brood-raising in progress. Increased herbage production after a fire provides more food for all herbivores from insects to large mammals so animal abundance is greater after a fire. Plant and animal species may change for a short time after a fire, but the area will return to normal pre-burn conditions within 1-2 growing seasons. A cool, or 'dirty', fire, which leaves some unburned areas, enhances animal populations. This patchwork of small burned and unburned areas creates more edge.

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361-882-6611

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**ADVISORS
TO THE BOARD**

Clifford Carter

Fire 'freshens' a stand of decadent grassland by removing old growth and stimulating new growth, improving its value for wildlife and livestock. Following a recovery period of one growing season, burned grassland is more productive and herbaceous plants more nutritious than prior to the burn.

Fire has a varied impact on animal populations depending on fire characteristics, size and shape of the area burned, and cover available to animals during the fire. The primary impact of fire on wild animal populations is the effect on habitat. If the fire altered habitat is improved for a particular animal that species will increase in numbers after the fire.

Fire benefits wildlife by increasing food supplies. Increased use of brush resprouts by deer occurs after a fire. Top removal of woody shrubs stimulates resprouts which are more palatable and more available to browsing animals. Top removal reduces the height of brush plants and for a period removes restrictions to browsing caused by sharp thorns and stiff, old growth.

Fire benefits ground-feeding birds such as northern bobwhite quail, doves, and a number of non-game species. Fire increased quail use of 40-acre plots on the Welder Wildlife Refuge, but the burned areas were too small and the time span too short to determine the effect on overall population. Quail were drawn to burnt areas to feed but there was no measurable increase in population numbers in the area of the burn.

Wildlife, particularly turkey and quail, are suppressed by excessive accumulations of mulch. Quail prefer open foraging areas. Rio Grande turkeys will not venture into areas with heavy accumulations of mulch or extremely tall, rank herbaceous growth. Both birds prefer some open ground; therefore, removal of heavy mulch accumulations with fire benefits both vegetation and these birds.

Prescribed burning increases forbs. A fire in early winter or the dead of winter when all plants are dormant suppresses forb growth, but a fire after cool season plants begin to grow kills forbs. Therefore, to create forbs for deer, burn in early winter; to create grass for cattle, burn late.

Burning improves the habitat by reducing detrimental parasites. Burning prior to the onset of cool weather when Gulf Coast ticks are still active fire destroys most ticks.

Prescribed winter burning affects bird population and species numbers in mesquite grassland. Mourning doves and great-tailed grackles increase and black-bellied whistling ducks decline on burned areas. The number of wintering birds is greater on burned areas. Savannah sparrows increase, but grasshopper sparrows, Le Conte's sparrows, and sedge wrens decline.

Summer prescribed burning is of much interest in Texas. The Welder Wildlife Foundation has conducted summer burns and is examining the effects of these burns on vegetation and wildlife. Preliminary results indicate summer fires increase the variety of insects. Summer burning suppresses woody plants more than cool season burning. Although not conclusive, several woody species are damaged heavily enough that several repeat burns may be effective in suppressing these species. Bird communities have responded variously to summer fires; however, no detrimental effects have been uncovered as long as a patchwork of shrub land and grassland remains following the fire.

In summary, prescribed fire can be designed to have positive impacts on wildlife, since its primarily effects habitat. Fire greens up decadent grassland, improving its value for cattle. Fire causes brush resprouting, improving palatability and nutritional value of woody plants for deer. Fire opens up habitat for ground nesting and feeding birds such as quail. Proper timing of fire can create forbs for deer. Rodents may be reduced temporarily by increased avian predation due to reduced ground cover. Tick populations are reduced, benefiting wildlife and cattle. Where strips or blocks have been cleared, burning the grassy strips while leaving woody areas unburned enhances wildlife habitat by causing an increase in forb growth.

BURN TRAILER

CBPBA has a fully equipped burn trailer available for rent. The trailer and equipment will be on display at the January 24 Burn school. Call Scott at 361-576-0022 for information.

CBPBA
Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association
P. O. Box 447
Beeville, TX 78104



Coastal Bend Prescribed Burn Association

Membership Application

Please print carefully so we can read your information

Land owner's name: _____ Ranch name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone number: _____ FAX number: _____

EMAIL Address: _____

My property is located in _____ County(s)

ANNUAL DUES (per calendar year) are \$25.
Make checks payable to CBPBA and mail to P. O. Box 447, Beeville, Texas, 78104
For more information call 361-362-0430