

Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week 2021

Post-Event Summary

Sponsored by the Loess Hills Fire Partners and held from April 26th- 30th, this event provided an opportunity to join with partners to achieve fire management in an area where additional skills and resources were needed to accomplish the work at a landscape scale. It was also an opportunity to build relationships with partners, share knowledge and skills, and work within a more complex organizational structure utilizing the Incident Command System. The 2020 Cooperative Burn Week was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We were very fortunate to be able to have the event this year by implementing strict policies and protocols for all participating personnel.

The Covid-19 protocols and restrictions the Incident Management Team set forth for the event were very stringent. All participants were required to maintain six feet spacing and wear masks whenever in close proximity, in vehicles, or inside any facilities. Participants were regularly encouraged to wash hands and sanitize commonly used surfaces to promote proper hygiene. We tried to maintain divisions working together throughout the week with minimal shuffling of personnel. Our morning operational briefings were broadcast by radio each shift to maintain our Covid-19 protocols and keep personnel spread out. All meals were prepackaged and separated, or individually served by the caterer. Throughout the course of the event, no participants showed any signs or symptoms of the Covid-19 virus.

Within our landscape and organizations, the squad boss level (FFT1) continues to be the most crucial and critical for fire operations. Firefighters at this level possess the local knowledge that aids in their ability to control both the holding and firing within their divisions, while also controlling the tempo for the day. Focusing additional time, knowledge, and experience towards this position level is a necessity for all organizations within the Loess Hills to continue to build fire capacity, proficiency, and efficiency.

The Cooperative Burn Week was based at the Broken Kettle Grassland Preserve headquarters. This year's event had a northern Hills focal area of Monona, Woodbury, and Plymouth Counties. Burn units at Broken Kettle Grassland, Plymouth County Conservation, Iowa DNR WMA, and Woodbury County Conservation lands were identified as priority areas. Each of our five operational periods presented opportunities to simultaneously burn multiple units at four different locations. We had participation ranging from 49-69 personnel on any given day. This allowed for pairing of trainer/mentors and trainees to facilitate a one on one working environment.

A total of 109 people from 48 agencies/organizations, volunteers, and volunteer fire departments participated during the Cooperative Burn Week. There was a diverse variety of the training opportunities throughout the week. Eleven individuals received evaluations for their FFT1 (squad boss) taskbooks, one FIRB taskbook, one Rx2 taskbook, and several served as agency burn boss trainees. Numerous trainees were able to work in their respective trainee role during more than one operational shift. Other training opportunities included learning new or different engine and UTV setups, portable pump set-up, firing and holding techniques, smoke management tactics, terrain influence on fire behavior, live fire size-up/initial attack exercises, tactical engine exercises, and

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working within a complex burn organization with multiple divisions organized under the Incident Command System (ICS). See Appendix A for a more detail breakdown regarding number of participants and acres treated. See Appendix B for pictures taken throughout the week.

Nineteen personnel from multiple agencies served on the Incident Management Team in a variety of roles. Several members served in trainee or learning roles on the team to gain experience and build redundancy within the region. The event also hosted a Guest Day in which 19 guests attended to learn more about the stewardship within the region, the Loess Hills Fire Partners, and the partnering, planning, and coordination entailed in the Cooperative Burn Week. Participants were able to see two separate firing operations on their tour, as well as interact with firefighters on the fireline from a safe location. Amongst the group of guests were legislators, agency administrators, organizational donors and supporters, event funding supporters, and media. The public information officers and other key staff for the event also promoted and moderated coverage of the event on several social media platforms enhancing the message of the importance of prescribed fire and collaborative partnerships.

Funding for this event was provided by The Fire Learning Network, the Loess Hills Alliance, and the participating agencies. These funders provided financial support for supplies, breakfast and evening meals, housing, and planning meeting support. Additional project support was provided by the participants and their agencies in the form of personnel and equipment time. Other participants donated their personal time and labor to support this event during unit prep, planning, and burn operations. The Nature Conservancy at Broken Kettle Grassland generously donated meeting and logistical space for the week while the Woodbury County Conservation Board, Plymouth County Conservation Board, Stone State Park, and Nature Conservancy provided lodging and camping space at their facilities for the week.

Participants have shared that the Cooperative Burn Week was a positive experience and was successful in achieving multiple objectives, including land management goals, fireline training and experience, leadership and personal development skills, and improving collaboration between partners in the Loess Hills region. The participation of 109 people, most of whom came from within the Loess Hills, speaks to the high level of interest among partners in collaboratively completing priority burn units and pursuing training and networking opportunities in the region. The attendance of several individuals from 3 different countries, 10 different states, and 16 counties within Iowa provided a strong benefit to our overall effort. Several organizations from across the state sent personnel to gain fireline knowledge, learn from a professional atmosphere, and gain tips towards starting other cooperative efforts across the state. The use of an expanded Incident Management Team as well as a more focused Incident Command System provided additional organization and smoother operations on burn days, during transitional periods, and throughout the week in its entirety. A more detailed After Action Review of the event will be conducted at the next Loess Hills Fire Partners quarterly meeting.

Appendix A: Participants, Agencies, and Acres Treated

Participating Agencies/Organizations:	Briar Cliff University Bureau of Land Management Cherokee County Conservation Board Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa Conservation Districts of Iowa Fontenelle Forest Golden Hills RC&D Hardin County Conservation Board Harrison County Conservation Board Ida County Conservation Board Iowa Department of Natural Resources Administration Parks Division (5 Parks) Wildlife Division (2 units) District Forestry Special Projects AD/Volunteers Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Iowa State University (Extension and students) Kansas Forest Service Minnesota GreenCorps Monona County Conservation Board Oregon Woods PASF- Ecuador Pheasants Forever (3 States) Plymouth County Conservation Board Pottawattamie County Conservation Board Private landowners- Plymouth County The Nature Conservancy- (5 State Chapters) The Nature Conservancy- Fire Learning Network TRES Coaches Network Turkey Creek Preserve United States Forest Service Wohlers Fire Equipment LLC Woodbury County Conservation Board WUI7 (New Mexico)
Fire Departments	Lewis Township Fire & Rescue (Council Bluffs) Salix Volunteer Fire Department Sioux City Fire & Rescue Whiting Volunteer Fire Department

# of Participating Agencies/Orgs	48
# of VFD Departments	4
Total # of Participants:	109
Personnel-Hours:	3944 Hours
Equipment Utilized:	15 Engines
	20 UTVs
	Countless Agency Vehicles & Handtools

Burn Unit Completion Summary

Burn Unit	Ownership	Location (County)	Day Completed	Acres
Hillview- Newburg Pasture	Plymouth CCB	Plymouth	4/26/2021	52
Oak Ridge- 3 Christman N	Woodbury CCB	Woodbury	4/26/2021	87
Stone SP- Mt. Talbot East	DNR- Stone SP	Plymouth	4/26/2021	14
Stangeldorf	DNR-Mo River	Monona	4/26/2021	79
Deer Creek Hoffman East	DNR- Mo River	Plymouth	4/26/2021	26
Deer Creek Hoffman West	DNR- Mo River	Plymouth	4/26/2021	67
Hargroves North CRP	DNR-Mo River	Monona	4/27/2021	77
Boyd's Bend	Plymouth CCB	Plymouth	4/27/2021	120
Oak Ridge- 1 NE Deer Run	Woodbury CCB	Woodbury	4/27/2021	150
5-Ridge- Rock Creek	Plymouth CCB	Plymouth	4/28/2021	183
BKG- Corral Unit	TNC	Plymouth	4/28/2021	12
Deer Creek Peterson/Rapaich	DNR- Mo River	Plymouth	4/28/2021	238
BKG- Little Lopez	TNC	Plymouth	4/29/2021	18
BKG- Big Lopez	TNC	Plymouth	4/29/2021	38
Heendah Hills Pond	DNR- Mo River	Plymouth	4/29/2021	39
5-Ridge- Rock Creek Interior	Plymouth CCB	Plymouth	4/29/2021	relight
Southwood- Hammond Timber	Woodbury CCB	Woodbury	4/29/2021	78.5
Table Marsh- Dudycha	DNR- Mo River	Woodbury	4/30/2021	483
Kohlbaum Easement (partial)	Woodbury CCB	Woodbury	4/30/2021	15.6
BKG- Visitor's Center	TNC	Plymouth	4/30/2021	0.5
Welsh Prairie	private landowner	Crawford	4/30/2021	14
King Cemetery	township trustees	Crawford	4/30/2021	1

State/Org acres	1284
Private acres	508.6

21 Burn Units
TOTAL 1792.6 acres

Appendix B: Pictures



Firing operations on the Corral Unit at Broken Kettle, Wednesday the 28th. Photo courtesy of Andrea Porter.



Broken Kettle Corral unit test fire, Wednesday the 28th. Photo courtesy of Andrea Porter.



Hillview staging area, Tuesday the 27th. Photo courtesy of Derek Christoffel.



Mobilization for initial attack exercises, Tuesday the 27th. Photos courtesy of Shawna Hartman.



A firefighter monitors the line on the Deer Creek- Hoffman West unit. Photo courtesy of Lance Brisbois.

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The crew ties off the unit on the Hargroves North CRP. Photo courtesy of Lance Brisbois.



International participant, Jose Duce, utilized several different ignition patterns to aid in building black and an anchor on the Hargroves North CRP. Photo courtesy of Lance Brisbois.



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Interior ignition strips clean up the Deer Creek- Peterson Rapaich unit. Photo courtesy of Jered Bourquin.



*Interior ignition burns out on the Heendah Hills Pond unit, Thursday the 29th.
Photo courtesy of Emily Hohman.*



Scott Moats of The Nature Conservancy, addresses the attendees for the Guest Day. Photo courtesy of Geoffrey Fischer.



Firefighters receive their morning briefing for the division. Photo courtesy of Kody Wohlers.

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*Fire marches across the Table Marsh- Dudycha unit, Friday the 30th.
Photo courtesy of Zach Hall.*



The crew ties off the Heendah Hills Pond unit. Photo courtesy of Geoffrey Fischer.



A crew performs their After Action Review at the end of their operational shift to continue facilitating training and operational improvement on the fireline. Photo courtesy of Thad Pothast.



A beautiful sky over a burn unit at Broken Kettle. Photo courtesy of Savanna Henning.



The Table Marsh- Dudycha unit is wrapped to cap off a great week of cooperative burning, training, and ecological restoration in the Loess Hills. Photo courtesy of Kody Wohlers.

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