

Welcome to South Central Texas Prescribed Burn Co-op

The SCTPBC is an informal group of landowners and others who have expressed an interest in helping each other conduct prescribed burns. Once we get our membership up to a point where we can get a committed organization, we will likely try to become an official Prescribed Burn Association. There are quite a few such associations in the state, with the Edwards Plateau PBA being the leader. If you want to see what such an organization looks like, you can visit their web site at <http://www.ranchmanagement.org/eppba/index.html>. This is also a handy source for reference material on burn plans, laws, and other information. One of their links is the Texas Interagency Coordination Center (TICC). They have a lot of good information here at <http://www.tamu.edu/ticc/prevention.htm>.

What we can do for you now as a co-op member is assist you in getting started.

- You are now on our members list. Please keep me updated with any changes in your e-mail or other contact information. When it is time to burn on your place, we will need directions or an address that we can locate on a mapping program such as Google Maps.
- We will inform you by e-mail when one of our members is conducting a prescribed burn. You are welcome to participate. This is a good way to learn. Depending upon your training and experience with prescribed burns you will either be given a support role so that you can safely observe the activities, or an active role in the burn if you are ready for that. Participation is voluntary, but the expectation is that if you want others to help you with your burn, you will need to help them with their burn. Some associations have a guideline that you have to have helped with at least two burns before the others will help you. We are not that far along yet, but you get the idea.
- We will keep you informed of training opportunities sponsored by NRCS or TPWD or other organizations. We may even put on our own training sessions, once we feel capable of doing that.
- We can help you prepare a written burn plan that meets accepted standards using an NRCS format. We can also assist you in getting the plan reviewed by NRCS or TPWD professionals if you choose to do take that step.
- We are working with the Texas Organization of Wildlife Management Associations (TOWMA) to have access to a Prescribed Burn Trailer, which will have the tools necessary to conduct a burn safely. The trailer is currently being kept in La Grange by TPWD staff, Bobby Eichler. You can contact him directly to arrange to rent the trailer if you need the equipment. Contact him at tel.: (979) 255-8477(mob) or (979) 968-9942 (office) or e-mail: bobby.eichler@tpwd.state.tx.us.
- You will learn what tools are necessary and will likely want to have some of your own. In general, I suggest you wait until you have been on at least one burn before you buy any tools. However, one tool that is important regardless of your role is a two-way radio. The FRS/GMRS radios available today are adequate for our needs. If you do not already have some, consider getting 5-watt GMRS units. You can get a pair for less than \$100. Often the type of rechargeable batteries used determines the cost for the unit. Be sure you know what you are getting. You can also get workable units for less than \$50, usually without rechargeable batteries. These are available at

discount stores and home hardware stores as well as online. Any that you buy will be compatible with any similar FRS/GMRS radios that someone else may have.

- Other tools that you will want to consider in the future are: drip torches, pressure sprayers (backpack or ATV mounted units), weather monitors, fire swatters, specialty rakes, shovels, hoes. This equipment is on the trailer that can be rented from TOWMA/TPWD.
- Safety gear that you will need are heavy cotton or leather gloves, long-sleeve cotton shirt and pants or specialty fire retardant clothing. Synthetics (especially nylon) tend to melt and stick to the skin causing really nasty burns and should not be worn. A bandana or smoke mask is helpful at times, and a cotton (at least not straw) brimmed hat will help shield the face when close to the flame. Leather boots are far preferred over jogging shoes or even low-cut leather shoes. An ash in your shoe is very uncomfortable.
- A few good sources for special equipment are:
 - <http://www.forestry-suppliers.com>
 - <http://www.benmeadows.com>
 - <http://www.firecache.com/>

The best thing you can be doing in preparation for a burn on your place is to decide what areas you want to burn and start getting firebreaks around them. A minimum of 10-ft break is preferred. Bare ground is best; low, green vegetation is sometimes suitable. Presence of cedar or juniper or other materials considered “volatile material” could mean wider firebreaks are required. Burns are usually done in winter after a freeze and before green-up starts (this can be as late as early March). Burn bans imposed by the county commissioners further restrict the time available to get burns done. So, you need to plan early, get firebreaks in place, and be prepared to go as soon as weather is suitable. Coordination with the burn co-op members is critical if you need their assistance.

That should get you started. Now check with your insurance agent and make sure that you are covered for prescribed burns in your homeowner’s liability insurance. If not, you will need to buy a separate policy. It appears that most homeowner’s or farm-and-ranch policies do cover this practice.

Also, discuss your plans with your neighbors and make sure they are open to the idea. You are liable for any damage caused by an accident. You are not allowed to let smoke cause a health problem for people, animals, or sensitive plants.

Thank you for your interest in working with us. I look forward to working with you.

Dave Redden
SCTPBC Coordinator

E-mail: dredden00@gmail.com Tel.: 936-878-1988 (h); 979-218-0493 (m)