

PUTTING FIRE ON THE GROUND WITH PRESCRIBED BURNING ASSOCIATIONS

John R. Weir^{1†}, Terrence G. Bidwell², and Chris M. O'Meilia³

A prescribed burn association is a group of landowners and other concerned citizens that form a partnership to conduct prescribed burns. Prescribed burning is the key land management tool used to restore and maintain native plant communities to their former diversity and productivity for livestock production and wildlife habitat. There are four excuses that are used by land managers when asked why they do not use prescribed fire: liability, no training or experience, not enough labor, and not enough equipment. Prescribed burning associations can be the answer to all of these excuses. To start an association, get a group of interested people together. Be sure to involve key landholders, agency personnel, and fire departments within the community. Associations already have been formed that have developed goals and guidelines that other groups can use. The association should incorporate so that all dues, donations, and gifts are tax deductible and the association is eligible for grants from public and private groups. Some local rural fire departments assist the associations during burning operations. This cooperative effort provides the association with added equipment and personnel and provides the fire department with training time, possible added income, and community service. The primary benefit of a prescribed burning association is its ability to influence politics. Also, the increased use of prescribed fire will influence the continued safe use of fire with future generations. At this time there are eight prescribed burning associations conducting fires in Oklahoma.

¹Superintendent, OSU Research Range, OAES Field and Research Services Unit; ²Professor and Extension Specialist, Rangeland Ecology and Management, OSU; ³Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service; [†]Corresponding author, 4922 South Coyle Road, Stillwater, OK 74074, 405-743-4714, email weir@okstate.edu.