



Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week 2022 Post-Event Summary

The Loess Hills Fire Partners held the 7th Annual Cooperative Burn Week from April 4th- 9th, and 18th, 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 an expanded Incident Command System.

The Cooperative Burn Week was based at the Iowa DNR Waubonsie State Park near Hamburg, IA. This year's event had a southern Hills focal area of Fremont, Mills, and Pottawattamie Counties. Burn units located at Waubonsie State Park, Nishnabotna Wildlife Unit, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and Pottawattamie County Conservation lands were identified as priority areas. Weather conditions this year presented challenges to actively implement fire each day. The Loess Hills experienced a prolonged drought throughout 2021, which extended into the 2022 spring months. High winds, critical fuel conditions, and county burn bans presented challenges for the week's event. Participants were able to complete burn units on four different dates within the extended timeframe this year. One operation allowed three divisions to burn simultaneously in three different locations, with three other operations burning single burn units in following dates as weather allowed. We had participation ranging from 47-74 personnel on any given day of the planned week. Additional dates saw crews of 13 and 27 participants come together. This allowed for pairing of trainer/mentors and trainees to facilitate a one on one working environment.

A total of 91 participants from 36 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. Nine individuals received evaluations for their FFT1 (squad boss) taskbooks, Faller taskbooks, one single resource taskbook, one ICT4 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 with their mentor. Other training opportunities included learning new or different engine and UTV setups, portable pump set-up, sand table exercises, position taskbook training, lessons learned from GoPro videos, multiple presentations, a case study, hazard tree identification and mitigation, chainsaw operations, and 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.

Twenty-two personnel from multiple agencies served on the Incident Management Team in a variety of roles to assist with the planning of the event. 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 professional photographer and videographer to document the event and work towards a beneficial stewardship engagement video accessible for all of the organizations in the region to utilize to engage a broad audience during future presentations, gatherings, and events. 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.

The weather conditions during the pre-set dates did not provide an opportunity for some of the top priority burn units needing additional resources to complete. As opportunity windows presented over the following 10 days, crews were able to re-convene to complete two of the priority units with great success. These two days should the incredible devotion and commitment to partnerships within the Loess Hills. The 750-acre Waubonsie unit saw 27 firefighters from five different organizations (8 entities within the DNR) come together to complete a very complex operational with two divisions, seven squads, and four communication channels. Additional firefighters aided with mop-up in following days to maintain public safety and awareness while the fire continued to burn material interior from the control lines.

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 overall planning for multiple simultaneous divisions continues to stretch the overhead for further learning and creativity.

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 Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Waubonsie State Park generously donated meeting and logistical space for the week, while also providing 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 91 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. 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, non-burn day preparations, and throughout the week in its entirety.

The Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week model has been adopted in another region of Iowa this year as well. The Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership hosted their first cooperative burn week in early May with strong regional participation and success! The event saw interagency collaboration from the Little Sioux River valley of northwest Iowa to implement fire in the region on multiple different organizational properties. This was a strong foot forward to share personnel, equipment, and skills in the region. The LSWCP CBW saw 38 participants from 13 organizations in their 2 days of operations burn 11 units totaling 973 acres. Weather conditions continued to play into a couple of days not being conducive to fire operations. This was a great start to expanding cooperative efforts in a high quality area. The two regions will continue to support each other for many years to come.

Appendix A: Participants, Agencies, and Acres Treated

Participating Agencies/Organizations:	Audubon Society Bur Oak Land Trust Central College Fontenelle Forest Golden Hills RC&D Hardin County Conservation Board Harrison County Conservation Board Ida County Conservation Board Iowa Department of Natural Resources Parks Division (4 Parks) Wildlife Division (2 units) District Forestry Private Lands Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Iowa State University (Extension and students) Lone Peak IHC Mills County IRVM Monona County Conservation Board National Weather Service Pheasants Forever Plymouth County Conservation Board Pottawattamie County Conservation Board Practical Farmers of Iowa The Nature Conservancy- (2 State Chapters) The Nature Conservancy- Fire Learning Network Turkey Creek Preserve United States Fish & Wildlife Service University of Nebraska- Omaha Wohlers Fire Equipment LLC Woodbury County Conservation Board
Fire Departments	Kelley VFD Lewis Township Fire & Rescue (Council Bluffs) Thurman Volunteer Fire Department

# of Participating Agencies/Orgs	36
# of VFD Departments	3
Total # of Participants:	91
Personnel-Hours:	3311 Hours
Equipment Utilized:	11 Engines
	18 UTVs
	Countless Agency Vehicles & Handtools

Burn Unit Completion Summary

Burn Unit	Ownership	County	Day Completed	Acres
DNR Riverton- Thompson	DNR- Nishnabotna	Fremont	4/4/2022	739
DNR Riverton- Jensen	DNR- Nishnabotna	Fremont	4/4/2022	723
Shawtee- Northwest	DNR- Nishnabotna	Fremont	4/4/2022	147
Shawtee- North Central	DNR- Nishnabotna	Fremont	4/4/2022	20
Shawtee- East	DNR- Nishnabotna	Fremont	4/4/2022	40
Wheeler Grove- Savanna	Pottawattamie CCB	Pottawattamie	4/4/2022	68
Mt Crescent	Pottawattamie CCB	Pottawattamie	4/5/2022	82
Thurman Complex	INHF	Fremont	4/9/2022	333
Waubonsie Front Range	DNR- Waubonsie	Fremont	4/18/2022	750
			State/Org acres	2014
			Private acres	888
			9 Burn Units	
	TOTAL		2902 acres	

Appendix B: Pictures

To see the complete photo album, go to: [Cooperative Burn Week 2022 - Google Photos](#)



*Clean line on the Wheeler Grove unit.
Photo courtesy of Andrea Porter.*



*Two flaming fronts come together on the Shawtee.
Photo courtesy of Matt Shanklin.*



*Riverton crew finishes off the operation with their AAR. Photo courtesy of Jason Taylor.
Loess Hills Fire Partners, May 2022*



*Squads come together to complete the Shawtee-Northwest unit. This unit include numerous first-time participants to the Cooperative Burn Week eager to build their skills.
Photo courtesy of Melanie Schmidt.*



*The Incident Management Team (IMT) are all smiles planning for the next operational period.
Photo courtesy of Shelly Eisenhauer.*



*Interior ignition on the Wheeler Grove unit proves efficient to clean up annual growth.
Photo courtesy of Derek Christoffel.*



*The Riverton-Jensen tract comes together to push a tall column up.
Photo courtesy of Lindsey Barney.*



Two heads pull together at Shawtee.
Photos courtesy of Kody Wohlers.



Every test fire is a thing of beauty!
Photo courtesy of Dale Maxson.



CBW Crews ignite a unit, while a neighbor lights a neighboring property off in the background. Building fire capacity is a continued effort in the Loess Hills, and it is always great to see private landowners take care of their own in the name of habitat and stewardship.

Photo courtesy of Kody Wohlers.

Loess Hills Fire Partners, May 2022



Morning breakfast, prep time, and operational briefings prove to be invaluable times for participants to interact with each other, gain knowledge for the day's overall operation, and have some time to dial in on individual assignments.

Photo courtesy of Shelly Eisenhauer.



NWS forecasters give a presentation to the group on developing their models for SPOT forecasts.

Photo courtesy of Shelly Eisenhauer.



Planning is an essential part to keeping the machine running smoothly, and providing the best product for all of the participants. The IMT works diligently to pair mentor:mentees to provide opportunities for training needs. Below, two smiling sawyers pause for a picture during our hazard tree removal day. Photo courtesy of Shelly Eisenhauer.



Loess Hills Fire Partners, May 2022



*Danger squad takes a minute to give their approval of the operation. Below, the crew talks over safe falling techniques, cut assessment, and risk management while cutting hazard trees.
Photo courtesy of Shelly Eisenhauer.*



Loess Hills Fire Partners, May 2022



Ignition teams drag the line to start the Thurman Complex. Photo courtesy of Kody Wohlers.



Fire helps with cedar eradication on the Thurman Complex unit, which included five different private landowners properties.

Loess Hills Fire Partners, May 2022



A firefighter diligently patrols the line during the Waubonsie unit.



Crew for the Thurman Complex gathers for a group shot after a long day. Photo courtesy of Bob Goodrich.



Scenic shots taken of the Waubonsie unit along Bluff Road. The very steep topography created a challenge for crews which was well mitigated through pre-planning to provide a safe operation for all personnel, as well as the general public on the adjacent roadway. The Waubonsie unit safe 34 personnel operating on seven different simultaneous squads to complete this operation of high complexity. Burn unit design, firebreak prep, and diligent crews set the day up for a huge success!



Loess Hills Fire Partners, May 2022



A firefighter takes a break from the chainsaw to enjoy the comradery.



Squads rotated through stations with sand table exercises, equipment familiarization, GoPro video analysis, and a position taskbook talk during one of the non-burn day afternoons to continue to development pertinent skills in operations and communication.



A yucca enjoys the majestic scenery from a high, Loess Hills remnant overlooking the Missouri River Valley. Photo courtesy of Jeremy Yost.