



Prescribed Fire Training Exchange Notes from the Field

Central Loess Hills and Loess Canyons, Nebraska

February-March, 2011

In a place where local land owners burn together every year, smoke is hardly noticed. These are fire-adapted communities, where ranchers and farmers use fire to keep eastern red cedars out of their pastures. Local conservation and land management organizations have seen this model demonstrated by the Loess Canyons Rangeland Alliance and would like to replicate in other communities; training exchanges can facilitate this by introducing the communities and practices to trainees and future burn leaders.

Braving highly variable winter and spring conditions—dodging mud holes, snowstorms and hot and windy red-flag days—the firefighters burned. Wind direction and temperatures swung to opposite extremes every other day, reinforcing the wisdom of the firefighters' mantra of "Remain flexible."

Below: By having a variety of burn units, prescriptions and objectives planned for an exchange, crews have flexibility in their daily planning, with each day's weather informing the decision as to which of the potential burn units would be appropriate to burn that day.



Above: Cedar trees readily invade prairies in the absence of routine fire. Left undisturbed, the prairie can lose significant productivity and habitat value. Frequent use of fire can kill cedar trees while they are young and maintain an open prairie or pasture structure. In addition, managers can use fire during certain seasons to favor certain grass species or enhance diversity, depending on their management objectives.

Below: Firefighters burn and then extinguish a six-foot "black line." This area, devoid of fuel, is then used as a control line from which to ignite backing and flanking fires.



Spring 2011 Training Exchange by Agency & Role

		The Nature Conservancy	USDA Forest Service	US Fish and Wildlife Service	National Park Service	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Bureau of Land Management	State/Local Government	Military	Other Non-Profit	Private	University	International
Trainee totals:		19	9				2	6			2		
Position	SIRB-FIRB/ENGB	4	2				2						
	FFT1	10	4					4			2		
	FEMO	2	1					1					
	RXB2 / RXB3	3	2					1					
	cadre		2					1	2				



The fires during the training exchange were not the last fire in these hills this spring. A few weeks after the training exchange, landowners in the area conducted another prescribed fire adjacent to the units burned by the trainees, making use of both the recent experience and the ready-made control lines from the exchange. Areas burned during the training exchange (left) greened up quite rapidly post-fire and served as control lines in a privately-conducted burn (right). Photo (right): Ben Wheeler

Training exchanges are supported by Promoting Ecosystem Resiliency through Collaboration: Landscapes, Learning and Restoration, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information about the exchanges, contact Jeremy Bailey at jeremy_bailey@tnc.org or (801) 599-1394.



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