



Canadian Prairies TREX 2022 Post-Event Summary

The Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange held the 1st Canadian Prairies TREX from October 15-21, 2022. This event provided an opportunity for partners to gain skills and build capacity, while simultaneously achieving fire management and ecological goals within Saskatoon and the surrounding landscape. It was also an opportunity to build relationships with partners, share knowledge, and work within a more complex organizational structure, utilizing an Incident Command System.

The Cooperative Burn Week was based at the Meewasin operations compound in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has experienced a prolonged drought for several years, and although shifting winds, dry climate conditions, and cured fuels presented challenges for the week's event, an ideal weather window just when we needed it allowed participants to complete burn units on four out of five days of the TREX. Sufficient resources and personnel allowed for crews to be divided into two divisions, allowing for concurrent prescribed fires at two different locations for three of the four operational shifts. The final day saw both divisions come together to burn at a single site, experiencing an expanded incident structure, while providing the opportunity for spot fire training with the extra resources on site. All in all, we had 40 personnel participate in the event, representing all four western provinces, and the United States. Incorporating practitioners of all experience levels allowed for the pairing of mentors and trainees to facilitate a one-on-one working environment for an exceptional training opportunity.

A total of 40 participants from 11 agencies/organizations- students, conservation staff, wildland fire personnel, and fire departments- participated in the Canadian Prairies TREX, engaging in a diverse variety of training opportunities throughout the week. Trainees were able to work in their respective trainee roles during more than one operational shift with their mentor. Other training opportunities included learning new or different engine and UTV setups, portable pump set-ups, lessons learned from GoPro videos, multiple presentations, a case study, ignition techniques and patterns, and working within

a complex burn organization with multiple divisions organized under the Incident Command System (ICS).

See Appendix A for a more detailed breakdown regarding number of participants and acres treated. See Appendix B for pictures taken throughout the week.

Eleven personnel from multiple agencies served on the Incident Management Team (IMT) in a variety of roles to assist with the planning of the event. The TREX also hosted a professional photographer and videographer to document the event, the result of which will serve to demonstrate the importance of our stewardship work in the region and promote future presentations, gatherings, and events. These will be available to all participants and organizations once completed.

While events of this sort often focus on building capacity among less experienced participants, this event saw six individual burn bosses gain experience and direct mentoring in their leadership roles. Within our landscape and organizations, the burn boss level continues to be the most crucial and critical for fire operations, although formal training opportunities remain few and far between. Firefighters at this level possess the local knowledge that aids in their ability to control both the holding and firing teams within their divisions, while also controlling the tempo for the day. Focusing additional time, knowledge, and experience towards this position level is a necessity to continue to build fire capacity, proficiency, and efficiency.

Funding for this event was provided by the Weston Family Foundation as part of the Prairie Grassland Initiative. These funders provided financial support for supplies, lunches, evening meals, IMT housing, equipment, and planning meeting support. Additional project support was provided by the participants and their agencies in the form of personnel and equipment time. Countless hours were donated to support fire unit prep, planning, and burn operations. Meewasin generously donated meeting and logistical space for the week, while also providing parking and storage space at their facilities throughout the event. A big thank you to The Nature Conservancy in the United States for sending two of their best trainers to help facilitate this event; Brad Elder and Kody Wohlers.

Participants have shared that the Canadian Prairies TREX was a positive experience and was successful in achieving multiple objectives; land management goals, fireline training and experience, leadership and personal development growth, and improving collaboration between partners across the Canadian provinces. The participation of 40 people (which was capped and had a waiting list) speaks to the high level of interest among partners to collaboratively address priority burn units and pursue training and networking opportunities within the region. The two professional trainers from the United States assisted to train personnel to gain fireline knowledge, learn a professional atmosphere, and gain tips towards starting other cooperative efforts across the provinces. The use of a Planning 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.

We're already looking forward to next year's event.

Appendix A: Participants, Agencies, and Acres Treated

Participating Agencies/Organizations:

- Meewasin
- Canadian Wildlife Services
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- University of Saskatchewan
- City of Saskatoon
- Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Parks, Culture, and Sport
- Skinner Native Seeds
- Wanuskewin Heritage Park
- Doane University (Nebraska, USA)
- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (Iowa, USA)

Fire Departments Saskatoon Fire Department

# of Participating Agencies/Orgs	11
Total # of Participants:	40
Personnel-Hours:	2525 Hours
Equipment Utilized:	6 Engine Trucks & Tenders 5 UTVs Fire Cache Trailer Countless Agency Vehicles & Handtools

Burn Unit Completion Summary

Burn Unit	Ownership	Day Completed	Acres
Northeast Swale- Salamander Slough South	Meewasin	10/17/2022	14.2
Northeast Swale- Dry Pond	Meewasin	10/17/2022	26
Beaver Creek- Sand Dunes South	Meewasin	10/18/2022	13.73
Beaver Creek- IBP Prairie	Meewasin	10/18/2022	6.3
Wanuskewin- Han Wi Prairie	Wanuskewin Heritage Park	10/19/2022	10.5
St. Denis NWA	Canadian Wildlife Service	10/19/2022	160
Kernan Prairie- Kernan Research Farm	University of Saskatchewan	10/21/2022	11.8

	7 Burn Units
TOTAL	242.53 acres

Appendix B: Pictures



St. Denis National Wildlife Area



Two igniters work in tandem to build black along the mowed fire guard at Beaver Creek Conservation Area. The right wind direction allows them to know how much to light and when.



Spot Fire Training at Kernan Prairie. After building a secure guard, trainers lit spot fires and had crews move quickly and efficiently to practice extinguishing them.



End of a Line. Putting Out a Drip Torch.



Crews ready within the fire guard to deal with any flare ups challenging the line. With the right preparation, an entire fireline can be contained without the use of a single drip of water.



A 3, 2, 1 Ignition Pattern. This pattern builds black quickly while pulling smoke off of igniters.



St. Denis National Wildlife Area Before and After.



Crews Being Crews. Many different tools and roles.



The Planning Committee Getting Ready for the Next Day's Events.



Elder Julie Getting Us Started in a Good Way.



Renny conducting a site briefing with drone footage from the Northeast Swale. Daily morning briefings let crews know the objectives for the day and where they would be working. We'd talk through the plan, identify any safety concerns, and make sure everyone knew their role for the day before leaving the operations compound.



The crew receives the operational briefing once reaching the burn unit site. This briefing lays out the plan for the burn unit, communication plan, medical plan, organizational structure, and site-specific information prior to igniting.



Crews set the test fire on the first day of operations at the Northeast Swale.



A firefighter ignites the perimeter of the burn unit, while other personnel monitor and hold the fireline.



A crew stops for a quick picture along the fireline at the Salamander Slough South unit at the Northeast Swale site. Crews from multiple organizations and agencies worked together to build partnerships, network, and train together.



Canadian Prairies TREX, October 2022



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Different ignition patterns and techniques can be used to secure a prescribed burn, as well as speed up the operation to make it more efficient. Participants were exposed to numerous different patterns to demonstrate these techniques, and they performed them effectively.



Crews grid for hot spots during mop-up on a prescribed burn.



A burn boss gives the crew their operational site briefing prior to starting the burn at St. Denis WMA.



This ignition technique, perpendiculars, allows crews to build black quickly, making it harder for the fire to escape.



A crew member does interior ignition along the water's edge at St. Denis WMA. Participants learned how to safely and effectively perform different ignition patterns, techniques, while being safe and efficient during the operation.



The sun sets over the Canadian Prairie TREX at Beaver Creek Conservation Area as crews finish up mop-up to further secure and extinguish their prescribed burn from the day.