



Loess Hills Cooperative Burn Week

Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Fremont, Harrison, Monona & Pottawattamie Counties, IA
March 2017

The Loess Hills Fire Partners' annual cooperative burn week provides opportunities to join with partners to achieve fire management in an area where extra hands or resources are needed to accomplish work at scale. It is also an opportunity for burners to build relationships with partners, share knowledge and skills, and work within a more complex organizational structure than usual, through use of the Incident Command System. An NWCG S-219 Firing Operations course was integrated into the week; the course incorporated both classroom and hands-on time focusing on ignition techniques and tools. This year's burn week ran March 20-24, with more burning taking place on the scheduled "rain days" March 27-28.

The week was based at Willow Lake Recreation Area, with most work focused in Harrison and southern Monona Counties. Burn units on Harrison CCB and Loess Hills State Forest lands were identified as priorities for treatment, as was a large complex on Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and private land in Monona County. Burns on three of these units were conducted during the first operational shift, on Monday, but subsequent days were more challenging to fire operations due to wet and windy weather. However a non-burn day on Tuesday allowed S-219 participants to complete the classroom portion of the course and receive training on proper fusee and flare use, among other subjects.

Then, as wet weather continued in Harrison and Monona Counties, the operations shifted south on Wednesday and Thursday, with the crew burning in Fremont and Pottawattamie Counties. Although these units were not in the identified focal areas, these burns provided key opportunities for training in a variety of positions including FFT1,



Crew members keep an eye on the interior burn out on the Riverton unit.

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as well as hands-on ignition time for the S-219 course participants.

The following week—during the rain dates that had been set during the event planning—participants were able to complete two days of additional burning on priority units. These included two units for the Harrison CCB and a large unit on the Loess Hills State Forest.

A total of 57 people took part in this year's Cooperative Burn Week, and 23 people took the S-219 Firing Operations course. Many participants received evaluations for their FFT1 (Squad Boss) taskbooks and several served as Burn Boss trainees. Other important opportunities included training and practice in firing very pistols (flares) and using fusees, learning new or different engine and UTV setups, and working within a complex burn organization with multiple divisions organized under the Incident Command System. Seven staff from multiple agencies served on the Incident Management Team in a variety of roles. There was also strong participation from local volunteer fire

departments, with eight individuals from six department participating on several burns. This was particularly important, as it has long been a goal of partners here to better integrate with VFDs on prescribed fire operations.

Participant Organizations

Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa
Doane University
Elon University, Elon, NC
Harrison County Conservation Board
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
—Parks, Wildlife, Forestry Divisions
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Little Sioux VFD
Logan VFD
Magnolia VFD
Missouri Valley Fire and Rescue [VFD]
Modale VFD
Mondamin VFD
Pheasants Forever
Pottawattamie County Conservation Board
The Nature Conservancy

Burn Unit	Ownership	County	Acres
Murray Hill	DNR/Harrison CCB	Harrison	69
Overlook	DNR	Monona	212
CRP field	Private	Monona	8
Jensen	DNR	Fremont	74
Noddleman	DNR	Fremont	90
Riverton	DNR	Fremont	945
Matters	Private	Pottawattamie	110
Farm Creek	Pottawattamie CCB	Pottawattamie	10
Old Town	Harrison CCB	Harrison	160
Vaile	Harrison CCB	Harrison	120
Jones Creek	DNR	Monona	718

In five days of burning, participants completed 11 burn units, for a total of **2,516 acres of fire** in the Loess Hills.

Participants reported that the Cooperative Burn Week was a positive experience and was successful in achieving multiple objectives, including fire management goals, training, and improving collaboration between partners in the Loess Hills region. The use of an expanded Incident Management Team and the Incident Command System this year provide for a more organized and smoother running operation on burn days and during the entire week, resulting in improved outcomes and participant experiences. The high turnout—with most participants coming from the Loess Hills—speaks to the high level of interest among partners in completing priority burn units and pursuing training and networking opportunities in the region. And the participation of several people from other regions of Iowa and Nebraska was a strong positive as well, as these participants are either state-wide collaborators in the land management community or brought unique and valuable experiences to share with local staff.



Top: The Murray Hill unit was one of the high priority units burned the first day. © Iowa DNR (Matt Dollison)

Right: An after action review was held after each burn (here, after the Overlook unit in Monona County).

© Pottawattamie CCB (Kody Wohlers)

Below: The crew re-gathered (here, at the Jones Creek unit) to complete burning on the scheduled "rain days."

© Pottawattamie CCB (Kody Wohlers)



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The Fire Learning Network is part of *Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities Together*, a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, USDA Forest Service and agencies of the Department of the Interior. For more information about PERFECT, contact Lynn Decker: ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524.



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