

Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association

News



July 2019

Focusing on cedar tree control and grassland health

Welcome

to our second newsletter

Setting our sights on fall burns

By Keith Hovorka,
MMRPBA Chairman

I am pleased to share with you our second issue of the MMRPBA News. Our inaugural issue made its debut in November 2018, and hopefully many of you found it to be an informative resource highlighting the efforts of the Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association. The intent of this newsletter is to keep landowners – and the public – aware of the importance of prescribed burning and the work being done by the MMRPBA, particularly in the target counties of Brule, Charles Mix, Lyman and Gregory.

Our prescribed burn efforts for Spring 2019 were in place, but unfortunately Mother Nature did not cooperate. In fact, the weather the last couple of spring seasons has made me realize there are not going to be many ideal opportunities to conduct a burn, thus having your burn plan done and ready to go is critical so when the weather conditions are favorable, you are ready to go at the drop of a hat.

Because the MMRPBA was not able to conduct burns this spring and burning cannot be conducted in June and July due to environmental rules, we are setting our sights on fall burning beginning in August if conditions allow. Fall burning of Eastern Red Cedar trees is done frequently in southern states, but will be new to South Dakota. We are eager to try it and evaluate how it works.

That said, we are already also looking ahead to planning for burns to be conducted in Spring 2020. Planning and preparing for a good burn is essential. I am becoming more of a fan of burning/killing cedars in later spring on a nice warm day. I have seen this works well when you have cut trees from the previous year and stuffed them into live trees to do a “jackpot” burn or burn out a draw. The live trees seem to burn into sticks so much easier the higher the air temperature. Another positive to this is that the green spring grass allows for a lot more control from your fire getting away from you. This does not work well for a grass burn because the grass is too green at this point, but if that is not part of your burn objective, then this strategy works well.

I was always under the understanding that once the cedars started to pick up moisture when it starts to warm up in the spring it can be more difficult to get them to go up in flames, but if you have ample fuel and a dry humidity/warm day they will go up in flames like you won't believe.

With prescribed burning being relatively new to South Dakota, we're adapting. Just like ranching, we recognize you have to be prepared, but flexible, and always willing to continue to learn. In the meantime, we hope you'll read this issue from cover to cover to learn about many of the MMRPBA efforts taking place. Please see page 8 for our MMRPBA membership application form and, if you have not already done so, consider joining our organization and this important conservation effort. Look for our next newsletter issue due out in November 2019.

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Agencies form Memorandum of Agreement with MMRPBA

S.D. Game Fish and Parks, South Dakota Wildland Fire and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers support efforts

By Dave Steffen

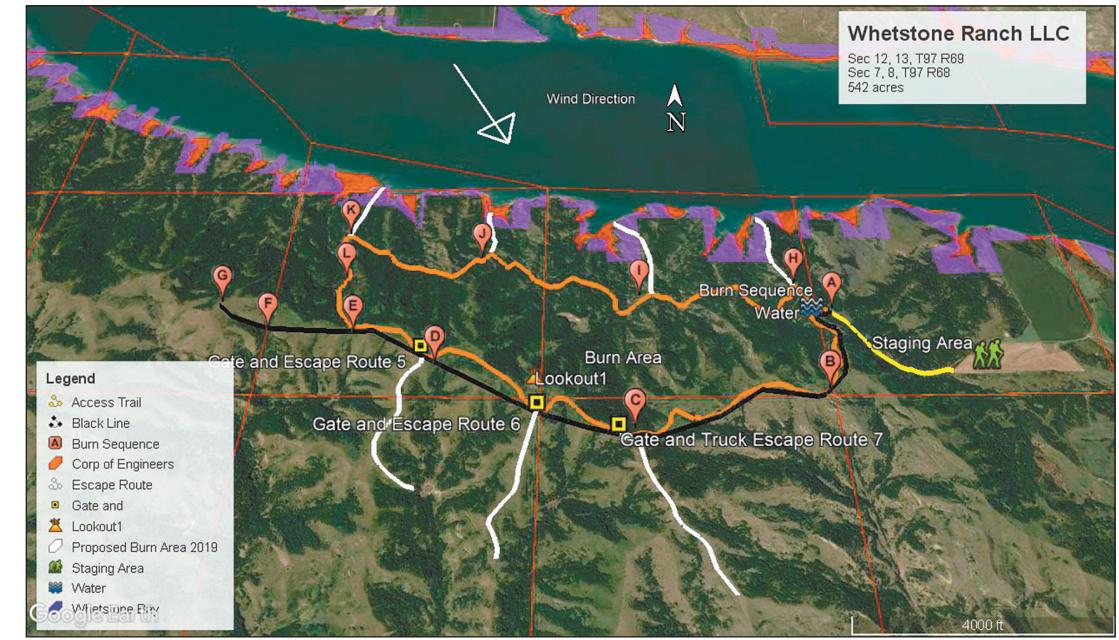
The South Dakota Game Fish and Parks and South Dakota Wildland Fire have collaborated to form a memorandum of agreement with the Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association (MMRPBA). The agreement will allow the use of prescribed burning to control Eastern Red Cedar on land along the Missouri River.

SDSU Extension range field specialist and Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association Liaison Sean Kelly, calls the agreement “an excellent example of government agencies working together with private landowners and non-profit organizations” for the benefit of the land.

Kelly explains that the agreement was important because many MMRPBA members and landowners along the Missouri River own land that borders government managed land that borders the water's edge along the Missouri River. However, in recent years, to know one's fault, bureaucratic red tape did not allow the MMRPBA to burn across those lands to utilize the Missouri River as a fire break.

“Consequently, this made planning and executing prescribed burns in rough river break country along the Missouri River for cedar tree control increasingly dangerous and complicated to plan and execute for the MMRPBA,” shares Kelly.

On behalf of the MMRPBA, Kelly



A proposed burn plan map shows how state and federal agency land along the Missouri River may be burned when using the river as a fire break.

expressed thanks to the several agency personnel involved for taking the time to hear the concerns of the MMRPBA and formulating this Memorandum of Agreement, and for forging a great working relationship for the future to control the cedar glacier moving up the Missouri River.

About the Cover:

Eastern Red Cedar trees succumb to the prescribed fire on Rich and

Sara Grim's property during a 2017 burn. See more photos from this burn on page 8w of this issue.

Photo taken by Rod Voss, NRCS rangeland management specialist.

The Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) formed to control cedar tree infestation and improve grassland health by conducting prescribed fires. MMRPBA's efforts will focus on land in Brule, Charles Mix, Gregory and Lyman Counties, with the goal to conduct 2,000 acres of prescribed burns each year for the next three years.

SDSU graduate student projects designed to answer producer questions

By Sandy Smart, SDSU Professor of Rangeland Ecology and Management

Last winter SDSU Department of Natural Resource Management faculty Sandy Smart and Lan Xu and graduate students met with MMRPBA and NRCS to discuss pre- and post-fire assessment of eastern red cedar trees. Together the group came up with nine main objectives, which include:

- 1) evaluate the soil seed bank of cedar trees and herbaceous vegetation;
- 2) evaluate the growth rate and spread of cedar trees;
- 3) evaluate tree moisture on a monthly basis;
- 4) evaluate the survival of cedar trees by vegetation type and grazing intensity;
- 5) determine the cost/benefit of providing a deferment and conducting a prescribed burn in terms of increased forage production and grazing capacity;
- 6) evaluate soil nutrient content on burned and unburned areas, specifically N, P, K, C, soil organic matter, and soil fungal/bacteria ratios;
- 7) evaluate erosion and infiltration rates on burned and unburned areas;
- 8) evaluate plant community composition on adjacent grasslands inside the burn unit and under heavy cedar tree canopy; and
- 9) evaluate cedar tree oil content on a monthly basis.



A round table discussion at the Grim Ranch to discuss research efforts on the land. Left to right: SDSU professor Lan Xu, Ann Zubriggen, SDSU professor Sandy Smart, SDSU Extension Sean Kelly, Robby Schafer, and Qinghe Li, a visiting scientist from Research Institute of Forestry Chinese Academy of Forestry.

This is a very ambitious set of objectives for the group and will involve 2-3 graduate students and several undergraduate students conducting independent research projects. Since the weather did not cooperate to accomplish the MMRPBA's spring 2019 scheduled burns, the research team will concentrate on establishing the pre- and post-burn assessment sites on three ranches in June and start the assessments in July. The advantage of this approach will allow us to have

information at each site prior to burning. The three ranches will be the Greg Schmitz Ranch, Rich and Sara Grim Ranch, and the Mulehead Ranch. Reports on findings will be shared periodically at monthly board meetings, workshops, annual meetings, and through semi-annual reports to NRCS and in newsletters. Look for social media posts on the MMRPBA Facebook page and the website, <https://www.midmissouririverpba.com>, as well.



SDSU students determining forage production using the hand clipping method. Several students will be involved in independent research projects relating to pre-and post-fire assessments.



SDSU graduate students and Sandy Smart visit with MMRPBA director Greg Schmitz (far right) on his ranch to scout site for research projects.

South Dakota's first burn association celebrates three-year anniversary

The Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association (MMRPBA) celebrated its three-year anniversary on February 27, 2019 at its annual meeting in Bonesteel, SD. The formation of this rancher-lead burn association was in response to the growing "green glacier" of cedar trees in the four county region (Brule, Charles Mix, Gregory, and Lyman) of southcentral South Dakota. As of present, the MMRPBA has 72 current and former members.

According to USDA-NASS Croplandscape, the acres of evergreen forest (cedar) have been on a steady increase in this region. In total, the cedar trees

are contributing to closed cedar forest of 275 acres/year. The MMRPBA is attempting to burn approximately 2,000 acres/year to stay ahead of the cedar tree expansion. In order to accomplish this, they are increasing their membership, adding equipment, and bringing fire training to the area. This year the featured speakers were Brian Teeter and Doug Whisenhunt. Brian is a Prescribed Fire Coordinator with Nebraska Pheasants Forever and Doug is a Nebraska Prescribed Fire Specialist with NRCS. Brian and Doug discussed strategies to conduct a safe prescribed burn in this hilly,

tree covered region of South Dakota. The take-away from this presentation was planning and communication, communication, and communication. In terrain where neighbors aren't visible, constant radio communication is crucial to create a safe burn.

The next time the association announces a workshop on prescribed fire training, plan on attending. The complexity of conducting a prescribed fire in this country demands a healthy respect for all the logistical aspects of conducting a burn.

-Reported by Sandy Smart, SDSU

From the Field: Arthropod community responses to fire and grazing

By Sandy Smart, SDSU Professor of Rangeland Ecology and Management

It appears as if insects rule the world when it comes to sheer numbers. A recent study led by Alyssa Vachino, an undergraduate student in the Department of Natural Resource Management at SDSU advised by Dr. Lan Xu, sampled over 24,000 arthropods at the Cottonwood Research Station in Western South Dakota.

Vachino and Xu investigated the effects of patch-burn grazing and winter-patch grazing on arthropod communities living in mixed-grass prairies. Historically, the Great Plains were grazed by large, roaming herds of bison. Fire was common place, either set on purpose by Native Americans or by nature from summer thunderstorms. Fire and bison grazing interacted to create a mosaic of grassland structure across the vast prairie. Following the invention of barbed wire, settlers hemmed in their livestock and pastures were heavily grazed. Later, range professionals suggested rotational grazing could help even out grazing distribution to reduce over- and under-grazing of rangeland.

Interestingly, these data collected supported their hypothesis. In the South Dakota study, patch-burn grazing had the highest arthropod abundance, followed by winter-patch grazing, and continuous season-long grazing. The most abundant orders were Hemiptera (true bugs), Diptera (flies), and Hymenoptera (wasps, bees, and ants). Many of these species play a role in pollination (butterflies), regulate pest insects (wasps), cycle nutrients

(beetles), and are food for birds and small mammals.

This study demonstrates the importance of providing a variety of vegetation structure to support more diversity of life. Recognizing that fire is not practical in many areas of the Great Plains, not to mention its cost, patch-grazing most likely could be applied to create heterogeneity on the landscape. Rotational grazing pastures and purposely varying the degree of use could create a mosaic of structure at the ranch scale rather than at a single pasture as was experimented with winter-patch grazing.

No matter what technique is used, the point is to provide a variety of habitats at a large scale to maximize diversity. Arthropod diversity is just as important if not more so because it provides many ecosystem services.

Sandy Smart's roles at SDSU include: Rangeland Management Extension Specialist / Professor, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Coordinator for South Dakota, and Undergraduate Range Science Program Leader.



Above at left: A large water tank on a trailer has been purchased for MMRPBA burn efforts. *Above at right:* An enclosed trailer has been purchased and will be stocked with essential equipment for MMRPBA burns.

Getting Equipped

Two trailers procured to assist with MMRPBA efforts

By Brad Christensen
MMRPBA Training Officer

Progress is being made in procuring equipment to assist the Mid Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association (MMRPBA) with burn efforts. The association purchased a H&H 7 x 14 tandem axle enclosed trailer with rear ramp door from M&J Trailers. The trailer will be used to haul and store prescribed burning equipment that will be available to MMRPBA members to use when conducting their prescribed burns.

The trailer will be available to members on a first come/first served basis with preference given for large burns vs small burns.

The member must have a burn plan that is approved by the MMRPBA Board and the burn must be conducted within the prescription and parameters outlined in the burn plan.

After looking at other prescribed

burn association (PBA) trailers and seeing what they have in their trailers, the sidebar at right is a list of what the MMRPBA intends to have in this trailer.

MMRPBA is acquiring items to put in the trailer as money is available; see the complete list on page 6. We have most of the items on the top of the list down to and including the fuel cans. The funds come from membership fees and payments for completing burn plans and burns through the grant in cooperation with SDSU and NRCS.

The trailer is currently under construction. When completed, it will have a fold down desk/work bench and there will be a white board on the inside of the side door. Plastic is being used to build the fixtures to hold the fuel cans and drip torches so clean up is easier. There will be shelves to hold the totes with the personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE's). The skid units will be on racks to easily move in and

out off the trailer. The skid units will be light weight enough to be lifted by a couple of individuals.

I'm doing the work on the trailer as time allows. In my dual role as Gregory County Emergency Manager with the second declared disaster of 2019, finding time to work on the trailer has been challenging.

A water source is needed during a prescribed burn and the MMRPBA board was looking to purchase a 1,000 gallon water tank trailer. We found and purchased a used, 20-foot, heavy duty car/equipment trailer with a 1,000 gallon water tank and a Pacer transfer pump for less than it would have cost to buy just the water tank. The pump had seen better days and was replaced with a Briggs & Stratton powered Pacer pump. The pump mount was made so the pump can be easily removed and stored inside the enclosed trailer. The hoses will also be stored in the enclosed trailer. The wiring on the trailer will be



As a final item, communication is critical to safely completing prescribed burns that meet the management goals. MMRPBA has access to 14 analog portable radios that can be checked out by members to use during a prescribed burn. The radios are programmed, with permission of South Dakota State Radio, with frequencies used by fire departments. This allows communication with firefighters if they are helping with the burn.

To check out the radios or for updates on the trailers or equipment, contact Brad Christensen at (605)830-0931.

Stay connected to MMRPBA and upcoming event details:



Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/MMRPBA/>
Website:
www.MidMissouriRiverPBA.com
Email:
[Contact@MidMissouriRiverPBA.com](mailto>Contact@MidMissouriRiverPBA.com)

The MMRPBA Trailer Will Have

Nomex coveralls	10
Large leather gloves	10
Extra-large leather gloves	10
Goggles	10
Wildland fire helmets	10
Face and neck protectors	10
Nomex hoods	10
Safety Glasses	5
Red 5 gallon gas cans	2
Yellow 5 gallon diesel cans	2
Drip torches	4
Backpack sprayers	2
Swatters	2
First aid kit	1
Handyman jack	1
Lug wrench	1
Tire changing ramp	1
Wheel Chocks	2
25 gal ATV skid unit	1
60 gal UTV skid unit	1
200 gal pickup skid unit	1
Tool set	1

Thoughts from a novice Burn Boss

By Tom Hausmann, MMRPBA Secretary

After my experience with prescribed burning, I spent some time reflecting on what I had learned and what I might have done differently. I thought it might be helpful to others as they prepare for a burn.

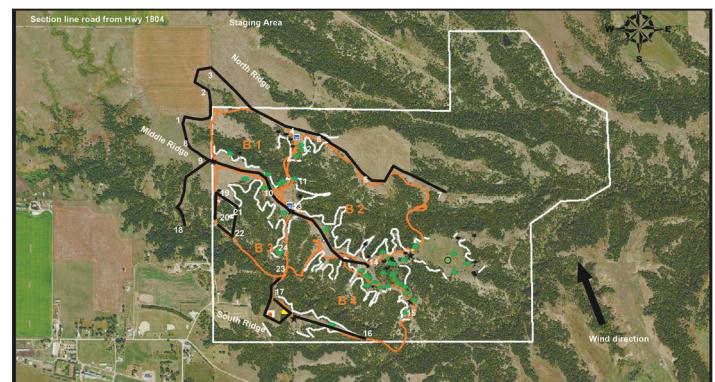
To begin, I realize I would have liked to have had more burn experience prior to my burn. If you're thinking of burning, not only attend a burn, but get involved where you feel the heat, inhale smoke, and get a real sense of the intensity of the fire.

I also didn't realize the level of detail the burn planning process was going to take. Not being a very detailed person by nature, this was a challenge for me. Depending on the size and type of burn, the planning process can get pretty involved.

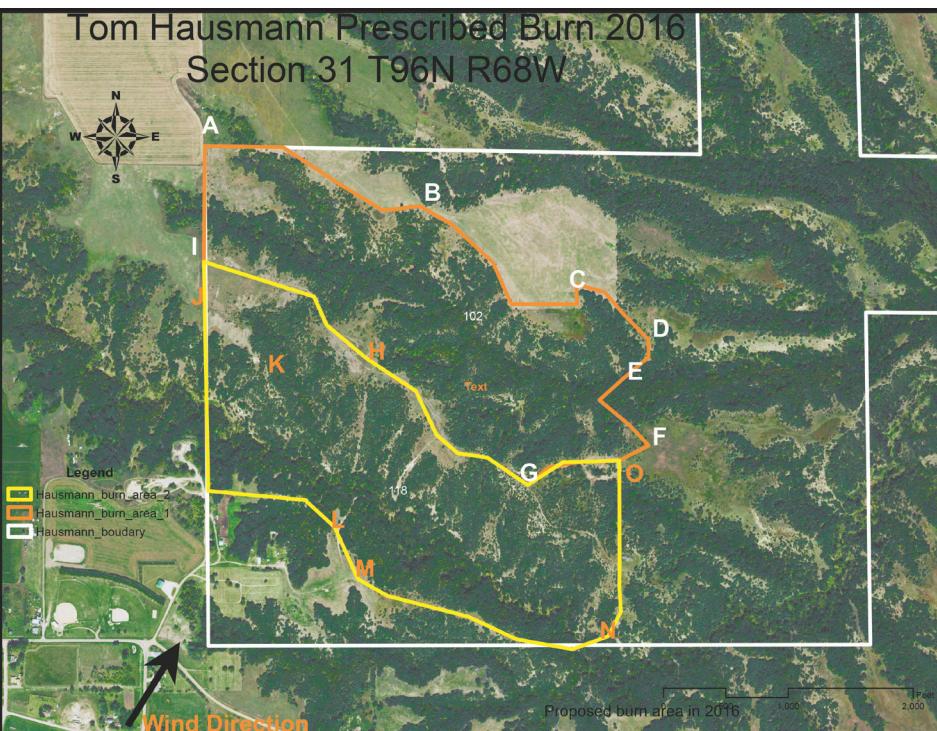
The Range Technical Note No. 10 on Brush Management available from NRCS is a good guide to get you started. For instance, it will suggest you start planning two to three years in advance. I didn't do that and wish I had.

Obtain and consider the requirements of the MMRPBA approved burn plan early on. This helped me gain a broad perspective of what I needed to consider and the level of detail that was required to fulfill the burn plan's expectations.

Consider the overall cost of burning. While I know burning was worth every penny, costs like delayed grazing, road/creek crossing improvements, shearing/tucking that may be required, and the burn fee as set by MMRPBA are a few things to consider that do add up to a considerable cost.



Above: An aerial view shows GPS plotting with the black lines that will be burned a few days before the burn to be used as fire breaks to control the main burn. White lines show areas where trees were cut and stuffed into thicker cedar tree stands to create ladder fuel to burn denser areas.



An aerial view of Tom Hausmann's property shows the two areas prior to the planned prescribed burn. Both areas were burned May 18, 2017 and totaled 240 acres.

One of the burn boss's responsibilities is to watch weather conditions daily to monitor the forecasts for likely burn opportunities. This constant monitoring of daily forecasts can try your patience. By the time I was actually able to burn, my black lines had turned green waiting for the proper wind direction, humidity and air temperature as stipulated in the burn plan parameters.

I focused on two things early on: safety of those helping me and emergency defense plans if the fire got away. The safety factor caused me to think

of issues from vehicle traffic in smoky conditions to enough drinking water for everyone on site. Emergency defensive plans included getting permission from neighbors to create a black line in their pasture if needed to having a tractor and disc nearby. Having an effective burn includes doing it in a safe manner.

And finally, get advice from qualified personnel early on. Their experience can save you time and effort. Again, having someone visit your burn site three years in advance would not be an unreasonable request.



Above: The black and white lines show escape routes, which must be determined and shared with all involved prior to a burn to ensure safety.

Fire at work on the land

A prescribed burn was conducted on 500 acres of land owned by Rich and Sara Grim on April 8, 2017. The group photo shows members of the Burke Fire Department assisting with the burn; MMRPBA director Mark Green is the individual wearing sunglasses. Also pictured (at right) Rich Grim and his son in law Seth Andrews observe the fire. Photos taken by Rod Voss with NRCS.



Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association

(Brule, Charles Mix, Gregory & Lyman Counties South of I-90)

Membership Application



Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

If you own land that may be burned in the future, which county is it located in: _____

Category of membership requested: (Check one)

Individual Membership: (May vote, dues \$25) _____

Organizational Membership: (1 vote/organization, dues \$25) _____

Name of organization represented: _____

Associate Membership: (No vote, no dues) _____

I wish to become a member of the Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association and agree to pay the applicable \$25.00 membership dues, certify that I have never been convicted of a felony or crime involving arson, sexual misconduct or extreme immorality and, agree to a background check.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Return Application and Membership Fee To:

Sara Grim
35801 Old 1806th Road
Bonesteel, SD 57317

Make membership fee checks payable to: MMRPBA

FFA student studies “A Burning Question”

Survey conducted to assess people’s perceptions toward prescribed burning as land management tool

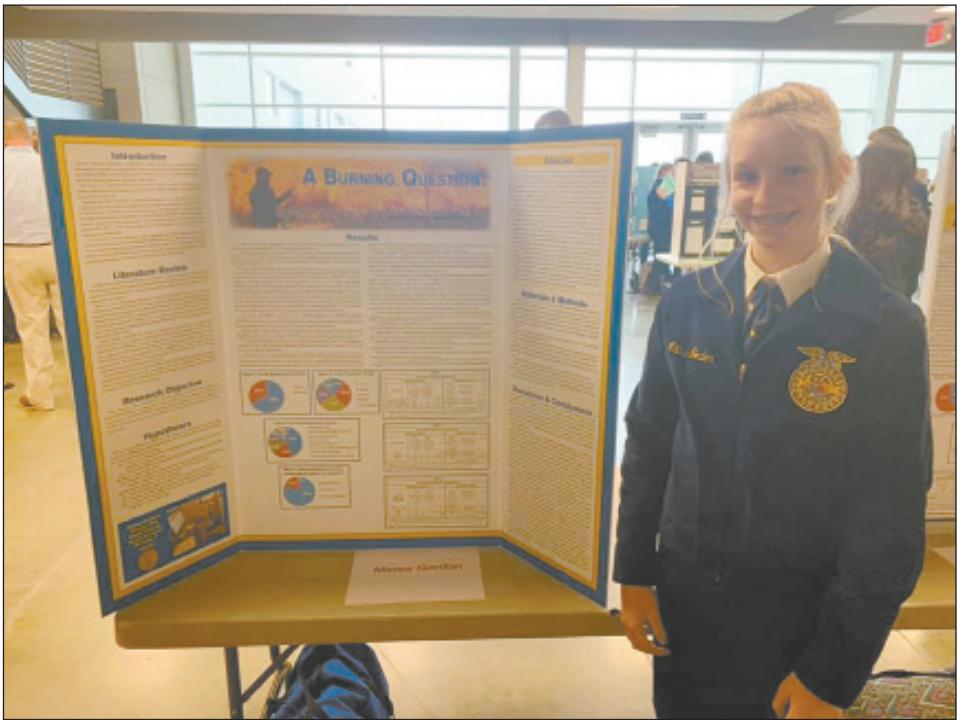
Are South Dakotans concerned by eastern red cedar encroachment on rangelands along the Missouri River, and do they support prescribed burning on these lands as a means of invasive species control? Those were questions Sturgis high school student Matea Gordon was interested in studying for her 2019 FFA Agriscience project. Gordon, who lives on a small ranch with her family, has been an active participant in South Dakota Rangeland Days for seven years which has fostered her interest in rangeland management.

For her science fair project, Gordon created an online survey with fourteen questions. Prior to making the survey public, the questions were reviewed and approved by Sean Kelly on behalf of the Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association. In February 2019, Gordon then promoted her survey statewide with South Dakota newspapers, including community papers in the four county region of Brule, Charles Mix, Gregory and Lyman. The survey was also promoted online via Facebook and was shared with MMRPBA’s email list. From the results, Gordon wanted to evaluate the survey responses to determine if any differences in perceptions toward prescribed burning existed based on age, gender or conservation knowledge level of the respondents.

Survey Findings

A total of 110 survey responses were collected. Seventy-six of the respondents (69%) were male and 34 respondents (31%) were female. The largest percentage of responses (28%) were collected from individuals ages 30-44. Next, 27% of individuals ages 45-59 responded, followed by 22% of individuals ages 60-70; 13% of individuals ages 71 and older; and 10% of individuals 19-29.

Survey responses represented a cross-section of landowners and non-landowners. Forty-three percent of survey participants indicated they own farm/ranch land in South Dakota, but not in the Mid-Missouri River



Sturgis FFA member Matea Gordon conducted a survey to gather data about perceptions toward prescribed burning to control invasive species on land in South Dakota.

Prescribed Burn Association’s four target counties of Gregory, Lyman, Brule and Charles Mix. While 19% of survey participants indicated they did own farm/ranch land and lived within those four counties. Additionally, 13% of survey participants indicated they do not own ag land, but live in rural South Dakota communities; 10% do not own ag land, but live in a South Dakota city with a population of 10,000 or more; 8% own farm and ranch land within Gregory, Lyman, Brule or Charles Mix county but are an absentee landowner who does not live on the land; 4% did not own ag land, but live in a rural community within Gregory, Lyman, Brule or Charles Mix county; 2% owned farm/ranch land out of state; 1% do not own ag land and live out of state.

If prescribed burning were used on grasslands within their county or a neighboring county, 91% of survey respondents indicated they would be in support of it; while 9% indicated opposition.

When this data was further evaluated based on age of survey respondents, the majority of all ages supported prescribed burning and no significant statistical difference was found between age groups and their support for prescribed burning to control cedar trees.

When further evaluating support or opposition for prescribed burning based on gender, 71 male respondents and 29 female respondents were supportive of

- using prescribed fire locally for cedar control. While 5 male respondents and 5 female respondents were opposed to the use of prescribed fire locally for cedar control. There was no significant statistical difference between gender groups and their support for prescribed burning to control cedar trees.

- Additionally, among survey respondents 90 individuals identified they had a college bachelor’s degree or higher level of education; 19 individuals identified themselves as high school graduates. Among these survey respondents, 64% identified themselves as having a “high-level” of conservation knowledge, while 36% identified themselves as having “average to minimal” conservation knowledge. Among those opposing prescribed burning, 6 individuals identified themselves with a high-level of conservation knowledge, while 4 individuals classified themselves with average to minimal conservation knowledge. Analysis of this data indicated no significant statistical difference between level of conservation knowledge and support for prescribed burning to control cedar trees.

- Half of survey participants indicated they would like more information about using prescribed burning as a land management tool.

- Additionally, 97% of survey respondents indicated support for use of prescribed burning as a management tool on public lands including National Forests and Bureau of Land Management.

With the information gathered from this research, Gordon concluded landowners and the Mid-Missouri Prescribed Burn Association can feel comfortable in pursuing future prescribed burning plans. However, because half of survey participants indicated interest in more information about prescribed burning, efforts to inform and educate the public about prescribed burning projects within South Dakota should be continued.

As the number of acres on which prescribed burning is used increase in South Dakota over the next few years, Gordon believes a second research project evaluating the support or opposition of South Dakota citizens would be interesting to compare to this baseline data.

Study results indicated strong support for prescribed burning as a land management tool to control encroachment of eastern redcedar on South Dakota grasslands.

- Among the survey respondents who were landowners but had never utilized prescribed burning on their land in the past, 47 survey participants expressed interest in trying it.

- Two-thirds of survey participants indicated they were aware that the Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association (MMRPBA) had been established in South Dakota, and 23 respondents indicated they are members of the organization.

- Ninety-four percent of survey respondents indicated they are aware that when a prescribed burn is conducted trained personnel are involved.

- Half of survey participants indicated they would like more information about using prescribed burning as a land management tool.

- Additionally, 97% of survey respondents indicated support for use of prescribed burning as a management tool on public lands including National Forests and Bureau of Land Management.

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**July 29-Aug. 1
King Ranch Institute Lectureship on Prescribed Burning
Kingsville, TX
<http://krim.tamuk.edu/prescribedburning/>**

**Aug. 20-22
America’s Grassland Conference, Bismarck, N.D.**

This conference will focus on transboundary grassland conservation, conservation on working lands, and restoration of grasslands. Field trips on Aug. 20 will offer options to visit one of three ranches: the Sand Ranch in southeast North Dakota, the Miller Ranch along the Missouri River, or the Oswald Ranch in the Prairie Pothole region. Several additional tours are also offered. The event is co-hosted by the National Wildlife Federation, North Dakota Grazing Lands Coalition, and North Dakota State University. For more information visit www.nwf.org/grasslandsconference.

**Nov. 12-14, 2019
Great Plains Wildfire Prevention Workshop, Deadwood, S.D.**

Hosted by the Great Plains Fire Safe Council the conference will cover topics such as mitigation practices, assessing the Home Ignition Zone, engaging youth in wildfire prevention, wildfire prevention techniques, and utilizing the digital age for wildfire prevention. For details visit <http://www.gpfiresafecouncil.com/workshop/index.html>

**Dec. 10, 2019
7th Annual Nebraska Prescribed Fire Conference, Kearney, Neb.
<https://nefirecouncil.org/>**

Upcoming Events

Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association

Sean Kelly

33815 288th Street

Gregory, SD 57533



Pictured: Photos show a successful 167-acre burn conducted on Justin and Sarah Bailey's property on March 19, 2017.



Become a MMRPBA member

See our membership form on page 8 inside!

The Mid-Missouri River Prescribed Burn Association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) formed to control cedar tree infestation and improve grassland health by conducting prescribed burns. MMRPBA's efforts will focus on land in Brule, Charles Mix, Gregory and Lyman Counties with the goal to conduct 2,000 acres of prescribed burns each year for the next three years.