



Increasing Prescribed Fire Capacity through Community-led Prescribed Burn Association

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is a national collaborative effort to bring a broad cross-section of stakeholders together to address wildland fire management challenges. The Strategy directs wildland fire planning activities and has three primary goals: restore and maintain landscapes, develop Fire-Adapted Communities, and improve wildfire response.

Activity	Impact
# total meeting participants	95
# landowners at meeting	75
# acres private lands impacted by PBA	15,000
% increase interest in joining PBA after meeting	65

One of the most endangered ecosystems in the United States is the longleaf pine ecosystem, located in the Sandhills and Coastal Plains Regions of the Southeastern US. The cultural, economic, and environmental value of longleaf forests has resulted in multiple efforts to establish, manage, and protect them. For this reason, use of forest management practices like prescribed fire, that are known to increase longleaf ecosystem health, are essential.

Approximately half of all longleaf pine acreage in the NC Sandhills is privately owned, but prescribed fire use by private landowners is infrequent due to: lack of experience or resources, smoke and liability concerns, permitting, and weather. Furthermore, limited agency and contractor capacity, combined with a narrow window of available burn days also limits prescribed fire use. To increase use of prescribed fire on private woodlands in the Sandhills Region of North Carolina, the Sandhills Area Land Trust is guiding development of a Prescribed Burn Association (PBA). A PBA is a citizen-run organization that provides educational programs, training and equipment to landowners

to increase the use of prescribed fire. Though PBAs do not conduct burns, they assist landowners in prescribed fire planning and methods (liability insurance, burn plans, fire breaks, equipment, funding opportunities).

Through feedback gathered from public meetings and surveys, Sandhills landowners expressed interest in prescribed fire and the development of a Sandhills PBA. The Sandhills PBA will offer one-on-one mentorship and field days to train landowners on conducting a prescribed burn, and will provide them with the expertise and confidence to conduct burns on their own properties. All landowners and the public are welcome to attend trainings, including experienced burners, those new to prescribed fire, and landowners who will contract out a prescribed burn but want to be familiar with the process.

The initial roll-out meeting of the Sandhills PBA occurred on February 11, 2016. Ninety-five total participants attended the meeting, with 75 of the attendees being landowners. Before the meeting, 34% of the attendees planned to join the PBA and 16% said

Success stories highlight regional wildland fire accomplishments that support implementation of the national cohesive wildland fire management strategy in the Southeast. The stories demonstrate how the Southeast is improving its "fire resiliency" through technology, education and outreach, forest management, collaboration, and more. Success stories also serve as a model for other communities to follow.

they would not join. After the meeting, 56% decided to join and 0% said they would not join! Seventy-eight percent of the meeting attendees were not Certified burners at the time of the meeting, but of those, 62% expressed interest in becoming certified. As a follow-up to the February 11th meeting, the PBA worked with the NC Forest Service set up a landowner burn certification class. An increase in certified prescribed burners will increase the amount of burns possible in the Sandhills Region and will also educate surrounding communities that prescribed fire improves longleaf habitat and reduces wildfire risk.

The Sandhills Area Land Trust explains that, “The Sandhills PBA will be a precedent-setting tool that neighbors can use to help each other increase their capacity and confidence to conduct prescribed burns. This community-based approach could serve as a model that could be adapted by other communities in North Carolina and around the Southeast to get more essential prescribed fire on private lands.”

Note: The Sandhills Area Land Trust’s project is made possible through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its supplemental funders.



Prescribed Burn Association meeting. Credit: Sandhills Area Land Trust

Contact: Jesse Wimberley, jesse@sandhillslandtrust.org

Partners: Sandhills Area Land Trust, Sandhills Longleaf Implementation Team, North Carolina (NC) Cooperative Extension, NC State University Extension Forestry, NC Forest Service, NC Wildlife Resources Commission and local volunteer fire departments



Southern Regional
Extension Forestry

