

## State-wide Prescribed Burn Alliance Workshop Minutes

### Background:

On May 27, 2011, Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension hosted a Prescribed Burn workshop at the San Angelo Research and Extension Center. Nine of 11 Prescribed Burn Associations were represented at the workshop (see Table 1). The purpose of the workshop was threefold: (1) discuss the concept of a state-wide Texas Alliance of Prescribed Burning Associations in support of local PBA initiatives; (2) gain input and perspectives on the potential organizational structure; and (3) identify methods of communication to share and distribute timely prescribed fire information among all PBAs and their members.

### Workshop Attendees:

The workshop was attended by Prescribed Burn Association representatives from across the state.

Table 1. PBA attendees of the San Angelo Prescribed Fire workshop, 2011.

Bivins	Andrew	Texas Panhandle PBA
Brite	Rooter	North Central Texas PBA
Brown	Catherine	Trans-Pecos PBA
Bruns	Dusty	Hill Country PBA
Caldwell	Tom	Tri-Canyon PBA
Doherty	Larry Joe	South Central Texas PBA
Ersch	Allen	Edwards Plateau PBA/Gillespie PBA
Gillman	Glen	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Goodwin	Jeff	Natural Resource Conservation Service
Graff	Stan	Dallas, Texas
Gutiérrez	María	Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources
Hays	Amy	Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources
Hays	Brian	Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources
Kenton	Jim	Edwards Plateau PBA/Cross Timbers PBA
Kothmann	Mort	Edwards Plateau PBA
Lopez	Roel	Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources
McCarson	Bob	Tri-Canyon PBA
Redden	Dave	South Central Texas PBA
Robins	Alan	Hill Country BPA
Schulz	Curtis	Edwards Plateau PBA
Sierra	David	Northeast Texas Prescribed Burn Initiative
Sturtz	Steve	Texas AgriLife Research
Tatton	Charles	Coastal Bend PBA
Taylor	Butch	Texas AgriLife Research

Tom	Jim	Tri-Canyon PBA
Walker	John	Texas AgriLife Research
Weiershausen	Marsh	Hill Country PBA

The workshop started with welcome and introductions, review of the workshop agenda, goals, and objectives. An overview of the NRCS-Conservation Innovation Grant was provided. The workshop discussion was organized by key topic areas necessary in developing an “Alliance” of PBAs and included goals, objectives, mission, alliance name and structure, alliance constitution and bylaws, and alliance communication network. Throughout the workshop, participants explored and identified key challenges and opportunities of a state-wide prescribed burn alliance. The key themes that emerged through the workshop are summarized below.

**Alliance Concept:**

- Prescribed Burn Associations (PBA) are an effective means of promoting use of prescribed fire on private lands across Texas.
- Currently, nearly 13 PBAs (two new associations were identified during the workshop).
  - Over 900 association members in Texas
- “Alliance” concept has been discussed over the last eight years.
  - To promote cooperation and support landowners in the use of prescribed fire
- Benefits of having a “State-wide Alliance”.
  - Single-voice of PBAs to address issues of mutual interest (e.g., insurance coverage, liability).
  - Increased communication and sharing of common resources (e.g., education, training, experiences, etc.).
  - Support landowners and increase the use of prescribed fire tools and equipment
  - Create a unified approach to work with county level government (e.g., remove barriers and limitations imposed by county level governments).
  - Increase manpower to implement the use of prescribed fire across the landscape.
- Workshop participants strongly agreed to form a “State-wide Alliance” of PBAs. The question of whether to move forward and form the “State-wide Alliance” was polled and as a result, the majority of the PBA representatives opted to form the “State-wide Alliance”.

**Alliance Goals:**

- Promote fuel reduction and address wildfire prevention.
- Promote the use of safe prescribed fire practices.
- Fire mitigation through the use of prescribed fire to reduce the risk to residential and commercial areas.
- Address long-term sustainability of prescribed fire uses across the landscape.

**Alliance Objectives:**

- Increase communications, share materials, and education/training opportunities/CEUs/CFTs (both within the alliance and externally).
- Enhance and increase fire culture as part of good land stewardship practices.

- Make insurance obtainable, affordable, and sufficient for associations (e.g., explore insurance alliance “umbrella” policies).
- Facilitate the sharing of resources among PBAs to include but not be limited to a list of funding sources, a unified paperwork trail and fire management set of documents, public safety aspects of fire, general list of things that must be included in a burn plan.
- Diversify educational experience, i.e., rural fire departments, mentoring of next generation landowners in the use of prescribed fire, increase use of prescribed fire on private lands, etc.
- Work with fire departments and assist to fight fires and investigative collaborations (both directions).
- Increase number of associations and provide local assistance and support.
- Promote safe prescribed fire implementation, i.e., environment, prevention of wildfires, etc.

**Alliance Target Audience:**

- Private Landowners
- Prescribed Burn Board
- Texas Forest Service
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- The Nature Conservancy
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Coalition of Prescribed Fire Council, Inc.
- Texas Farm Bureau
- County Commissioner’s Court
- National Fire Protection Associations
- Volunteer Fire Departments
- Natural Resource agencies (e.g., Texas Wildlife Association, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers Association, Texas Exotic Wildlife Association, Texas Wild Turkey Association, Texas Cattle Raisers Association, etc.)
- General public

**Alliance Key Issues/Priorities:**

- Increase communication/share of resources for issues of mutual interest.
- Address the insurance liability of PBAs.
- Increased education and training for Association members and target stakeholders (e.g., County Commissioner’s Courts).
- Improved data collection on prescribed fire applied by PBAs.
- Sustainability of prescribed fire users through data collection, research, training and hand-on application.
- Protect and enhance water resources through the use of prescribed fire.
- Advocacy, e.g., prescribed fire friendly legislation.
- Promoting county-wide fire management plan (strategic plans).
- Share resources/RFP funding opportunities/sample proposals and funded proposals.
- Promote/incentivize existing policies.

- To redefine the policy open space land use
- Association support and Fire Tool Kit.
  - General prescribed fire training/education, etc.
  - Media “tool kit” (commercials, videos, etc.)
  - Targeting new areas for starting new associations (recruiting)
  - Prescribed burn templates
  - Insurance and Planning
  - Advocacy template letters
- Explore the establishment of a 501(c)(3) “Umbrella Alliance.” (Need to explore if this type of organization is allowed to lobby).
- Unified message on key issues of interest.
- Explore and provide benefits of membership i.e., discount membership, cards that offer discounts with various vendors, etc.
- Associations are under more scrutiny due to recent wildfires.
- Tort Reform
  - Remove liability from landowners conducting prescribed fires who meet education and experience requirements.
- Associations need to establish guidelines on how burns should be conducted.
- Associations need to determine minimum equipment for different types of burns.
  - Grass
  - Brush
  - Rough terrain,
  - Coastal Plains, etc.
- Associations need to train members to approve and conduct burns.
- Develop a statewide fire policy and determine how PBAs can assist in this process.
- Work toward a state-wide consistency in communicating with local county governments.
- Establish a state-wide form of communication among the associations.
- Find ways to assist new associations starting out with little or no experience in prescribed burning.
  - Education
  - Equipment
  - Recruitment

**Name of Alliance:**

- “Texas Alliance of Prescribed Burn Associations (TAPBA)” was the top choice
- Alliance of Texas Burn Associations (ATBA)
- Texas Fire Alliance (TFA)
- Texas Fire Mitigation Alliance (TFMA)
- Use the word “prescribed” on alliance name

**Structure and Functions of Alliance:**

- Determine structured of steering committee and alliance organization, i.e., rotating and over-lapping terms.
  - Identify and provide “pros and cons” of how to manage the alliance.

- Define number of positions and outline duties, i.e., treasurer, finance, secretary, etc.
- Determine effective fundraising strategies (membership, sponsorship, grants, etc.).
  - Determine how to apply for grants/funding, i.e., as an alliance or individual associations.
  - Provide grant writing assistance and support.
- Determine plan of action on how to maintain political impact.
- Setup working groups that might function as a steering committee to address the structure and organization of the alliance.
- Evaluate and determine if membership to the alliance will be fee driven, i.e., single fee from each association who wants to join alliance.

**Next Steps:**

- Provide workshop overview at Prescribed Fire Challenges and Opportunities Workshop (Next day).
- Disseminate workshop minutes (within the next 2 weeks).
- Identify Alliance Steering Committee Members (Teleconference meeting within 1-2 months).
  - Identify work groups to address: (1) Alliance Structure/Organization and Alliance Constitution and/or charter, (2) Finances, (3) Education and Training, and (4) Umbrella Prescribed Fire Insurance. Work groups are open to PBA leadership and members. Interested parties who want to serve on any of the working groups need to e-mail Maria R. Gutierrez at [mrgutierrez@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mrgutierrez@ag.tamu.edu) by Thursday, June 30, 2011.
- Draft Constitution/Charter (via workgroups) for Alliance consideration (Draft in 1-2 months).
- First Meeting of Alliance (Via Teleconference; Date TBD within next 3 months).
- Launch and refine Alliance Portal.
- Continued support of Texas AgriLife/IRNR during transition phase.