

Prescribed Burning Policy

Prescribed burning is recognized as a valuable tool for the restoration and management of some natural communities. Therefore, Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois (GPF) conducts prescribed burns at sites that it owns and GPF members lead or participate in prescribed burns at other sites in public or private ownership. Prescribed burning is the controlled setting of a fire using existing natural fuels (vegetation and plant litter) to burn a specified area under appropriate environmental conditions in order to achieve a management goal.

This policy governs the use of prescribed burning by GPF members acting as a fire boss (i.e. the person who organizes the burn and ignites the fire). The organization recognizes that any prescribed burn is a potentially hazardous situation with legal consequences in terms of liability. The liability insurance carried by GPF will cover only fire bosses who are members in good standing of GPF and have followed all provisions of this policy. The fire boss must sign a waiver indicating that he/she has read the Prescribed Burning Policy and understands that he/she will be personally liable for any damage resulting from a prescribed burn that has not been conducted in compliance with this policy.

Extent of prescribed burns

1. No site, regardless of its size, will be burned in its entirety during a given burn season (fall through spring). A site should be divided into at least two burn units and at least one burn unit must remain unburned during a burn season. The fire will be contained to the unit(s) scheduled to be burned by control lines or natural firebreaks. The unburned unit(s) should be large enough to provide sufficient habitat for animal populations.
2. Exceptions to the above can be made:
 - a. if there is a large area of the same type of natural community on land adjacent to the site that is to be burned.
 - b. if portions of a site to be ignited will remain unburned because of their vegetation, hydrology, or topography.

Timing of prescribed burns

Prescribed burns will be conducted only between October 15 and April 15 (the time frame established for prescribed burns in central Illinois by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources) unless a special exception is made by the GPF Stewardship Chair.

Prescribed burning procedures

1. A [Prescribed Burning Plan](#) for a site will be prepared by the site steward or other GPF member acting as fire boss and submitted at least one month in advance of the burn to the GPF Stewardship Chair for approval. The plan must be completed on the form provided by GPF. The Stewardship Chair will review the plan and either approve the plan as

submitted or inform the fire boss of any necessary changes. The review will be completed at least one week in advance of the burn.

2. The GPF Burn Coordinator will obtain permits from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency on an annual basis for all sites that may be burned. The GPF Burn Coordinator will assist the fire boss with the acquisition of any other necessary permits.
3. Grand Prairie Friends will provide sufficient equipment for conducting prescribed burns, including drip torches, water packs, and protective wear. The GPF Burn Coordinator will help the fire boss get the necessary equipment and recruit a burn crew.
4. The fire boss will notify the local fire department, regional 911 dispatcher, and adjacent landowners that a prescribed burn is to be conducted.
5. The fire boss is responsible for determining if and when the prescribed burn will be conducted. The burn must be performed only under safe conditions, including appropriate weather (wind direction and speed, air temperature, and relative humidity) and the presence of a burn crew large enough to contain the fire. The fire boss should also check the site for biological conditions (e.g. animal activity, plant phenology) that would be vulnerable to fire. If conditions would make the burn unsafe or difficult to contain, if the objective(s) of the burn cannot be accomplished, or if there will be excessive harm to animals or desirable plant species, the fire will not be ignited.
6. Prior to igniting the fire, the fire boss will check that the burn equipment is working properly and instruct the burn crew about burn procedures (including how to deal with an escaped burn) and safety.
7. The fire boss will complete and sign the [Day of Burn Checklist](#) and record information during the burn needed to complete the Prescribed Burn Report (using the form provided by GPF). The checklist and report should be submitted to the GPF Stewardship Chair within one week of the prescribed burn.

Escaped burn procedure

1. If a prescribed burn escapes the intended burn unit, the fire boss is responsible for taking any measures which in his/her judgement will bring the escaped burn under control. Once the escaped burn has been controlled, the fire boss will personally notify the GPF President by telephone within 24 hours of the burn. E-mail messages, messages left on answering machines, or voice mail messages will not be considered adequate reporting in the event of an escaped burn. If the GPF President cannot be reached within 24 hours, the fire boss should contact the GPF Stewardship Chair within 48 hours of the burn. At that time the fire boss will provide the following information:
 - a. what caused the fire to escape
 - b. what actions were taken to control the escaped burn
 - c. how many additional acres were burned by the escaped burn
 - d. whether the escaped burn left the management area and burned land of adjacent landowners
 - e. what injuries, if any, were caused by the escaped burn
 - f. what damage, if any, was done to real or personal property
 - g. whether local assistance was obtained (fire department, neighbors, etc.)
 - h. if the burn escaped the management area, was the landowner present or notified?
 - i. if so, what was the landowner's response?

2. Upon determining that the fire boss complied fully with the GPF Prescribed Burn Policy and an approved Prescribed Burning Plan, the GPF President (or another officer) will report any injuries or property damage caused by the escaped burn to the organization's insurance company. If the burn escaped the burn unit, but did not leave the management area, and if the landowner was not present at the burn, the GPF Stewardship Chair will contact the landowner as soon as possible and inform him/her of the escaped burn, what additional area was burned, and any injury or property damage resulting from the escaped burn.
3. The fire boss will attach a written version of the information that was provided to the GPF President or Stewardship Chair to the Prescribed Burning Report.