

Tour to highlight use of prescribed burns

Written by Gothenburg Times
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The Loess Canyons Rangeland Alliance (LCRA), a local prescribed burn association, will host a public tour of cattle pastures that the group has burned in a cooperative effort to improve the land for both cattle grazing and wildlife.

The tour, set for Friday, June 4, from 3-7 p.m., will depart from City Park, on Center Avenue in Curtis. From there, participants will caravan north to the scenic Loess Canyons.

Landowners will share their personal experiences with prescribed burning and discuss the group's keys to success. Along the tour, representatives from the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Quail Forever will speak about programs and resources available to producers to facilitate the use of prescribed burning.

The benefits of prescribed fire for red cedar control, grassland health and wildlife habitat will be highlighted.

Kort Kemp of the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition will demonstrate grassland monitoring techniques and discuss NGLC opportunities. The group will also conduct a demonstration of prescribed fire ignition and mop-up techniques and prescribed burning equipment will be on display.

Landowners interested in incorporating prescribed fire in their land management, along with all other curious citizens, are encouraged to attend.

"You really need to come see for yourself how we are carefully and purposefully using fire to improve our range land," said Scott Stout, the LCRA burn coordinator. "We aren't just out here throwing matches!"

The vision that sparked the formation of the LCRA was that of building a group that would pool resources and labor to cooperatively implement prescribed burning, much in the fashion of branding or threshing bees.

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In 2002, a handful ranchers and conservation professionals who were fed-up with standing by to watch the Loess Canyons prairie being taken-over by invasive eastern red cedar trees banded together to form the LCRA.

Since that time, the LCRA has grown to several members, has built a large cache of prescribed burning equipment and has burned over 13,000 acres without a major escape or incident.

T.J. Walker, a biologist with the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, praised the LCRA as “a ground-breaking landowner-driven group in the field of prescribed fire.”

The group was recently awarded a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust to purchase additional equipment to improve safety and communication on prescribed fires. The Nebraska Legislature created the Nebraska Environmental Trust in 1992.

Using the revenue from the Nebraska Lottery, the trust has provided grants to 1,231 projects across the state. Anyone can apply—citizens, conservation organizations, communities, businesses and individuals that want to protect Nebraska’s natural habitat, improve water quality and quantity or find ways to manage our waste.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust works to preserve, protect and restore our natural resources for future generations.

A barbecue meal will be served free of charge at the conclusion of the tour, and folks are encouraged to RSVP to guarantee their plate. To learn more about this informational tour or to RSVP, please contact Stan Pilcher at 308-367-7626.