

Gothenburg to host prescribed burn school

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A Gothenburg site is included for landowner workshops to train people how to burn fields.

The Central Platte Natural Resources District has selected sites for the 2014 Prescribed Burn Schools.

These burn schools are taking place for landowners who want to learn how to burn safely for CRP renovation, grasslands management, invasive species control and wildlife habitat improvement.

Sites remaining on the schedule and registration contact numbers include:

Gothenburg—Monday, Feb. 3, Nebraska Barn & Grill, 308-324-5501

Burwell—Tuesday, Feb. 4, Burwell Legion Club, 308-346-4200

Litchfield—Wednesday, Feb. 5, Winter's Building, 308-236-1235

Elwood—Thursday, Feb. 6, Civic Center, 308-995-6688

The schools' lead speaker will be Josh Hiller from California. Hiller began his wild land firefighting career in 1996 with Firestorm. He has been training in the field and in the classroom.

In 2007 he was officially certified as an NWSA lead instructor. Since then, Hiller has been an instructor in over 70 courses with over 1400 classroom hours. He now serves as Firestorms' emergency services coordinator.

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Hiller will discuss fire behavior, burning methods and techniques, and equipment and crew needs. Other speakers will address prescribed-fire planning, fire weather and Nebraska burn laws.

One of the primary uses of prescribed fire in Nebraska is management of eastern red cedar trees, which have been increasing in extent and density on the state's grasslands for more than 50 years.

An Oklahoma State University researcher has calculated that Nebraska is losing 700 acres of grazing land per day. Prescribed fire, if properly planned and executed, has been a safe, effective and economical management tool.

All schools will meet from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with registration at 8:30 a.m. Cost is \$10 and includes lunch. Pre-registration is required for the meal count. Burn demonstrations will be planned following workshops.

School participants who attend one class session and one of several training burns scheduled for later in the spring are certified to use task-force equipment for a nominal fee to conduct their own prescribed fires.

The Prescribed Burn Task Force was formed in 1994. Since then it has held 64 schools attended by more than 1,650 students, while demonstration burns total more than 33,000 acres. The schools teach safe and effective use of fire as a management tool, and school graduates can use task-force burn equipment. Instructors have included leading prescribed-fire experts from Nebraska and across the United States.

The task force includes landowners and agency personnel primarily from Buffalo, Custer, Dawson and Lincoln counties. Members include volunteer firefighters, Central Platte, Lower Loup, Tri-Basin and Twin Platte Natural Resources Districts, the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, University of Nebraska Extension Service, Pheasants and Quail Forever, and the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District.

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