

Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting  
New Mexico Prescribed Fire Council  
10 am to 4 pm, Wednesday 2 November 2011  
Pritzlaff Ranch, San Ignacio, NM

### **Welcome and Introductions**

*Chairman Kent Reid called the meeting to order at 10:25 (see attached sign-in sheet for attendees)*

### **Report of the past year**

October 2010: The Annual Meeting for 2010 was held at the Albuquerque Fire Academy

November: Invited by the National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils to join them. We sent in the bylaws and the names of two contacts, Kent and Doug Cram.

February: We received a request from a Guadalupe County landowner for help in pile burning. They were referred to the NRCS, BLM, SLO, and Cooperative Extension.

April: The Steering Committee met, reviewed the minutes from the October meeting and published them. We developed the following list of action items:

1. QUARTERLY SITE VISITS. NEED TO SCHEDULE – KENT WILL CONTACT GABE
2. WEBSITE SITE DEVELOPMENT – JEREMY WILL INVESTIGATE ON HOW TO PARTNER WITH THE *KNOW YOUR WATERSHED PORTAL*
3. SMOKE MANAGEMENT REVISION STATUS
4. EDUCATION FOR SMOKE REPORTING FOR PRIVATE LANDOWNERS (NMED NEEDS TO TAKE THE LEAD)
5. CONTACT THE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS TO GET ORGANIZED AND TO PREPARE AN ACTION PLAN FOR NEXT MEETING.
6. START AND MAINTAIN AN EMAIL LIST OF PUBLIC WHO WILL SUPPORT PRESCRIBED FIRE, ESP BEFORE AQB AND WITH SMOKE

June/July: Op/Ed piece on smoke, written by Kent, Doug Cram, and Brian Henington, and published by the Albuquerque Journal.

August: Steering Committee met to make plans for Fall 2011. Milnesand was considered as the venue for the annual meeting, but follow-up led to rejection of that idea. The decision was made to meet at the Pritzlaff Ranch in conjunction with the NM Tree Farm Committee.

November: Annual meeting at Pritzlaff.

Comment was made by Bob Lineback on why it is important to be a part of the NCPFC, the benefits of being part of a larger organization, exchange of information, etc

### **Introduction of NM Tree Farm Program** by Chairman Joe Stehling:

56% of forested lands in the US are private

Part of the American Forest Foundation

Educate forest landowners on proper forest management (Wood, water, wildlife, recreation)

Tree Farmers are people who want to practice good forestry

25% of all fresh water comes from private lands

60% of endangered species live on private lands

All types of forested properties are eligible

Advantages to landowners of being Tree Farmers means that their harvested wood products are certified; gradually changing the name from Tree Farms to Certified Family Forests.

Technical advice from consultants and service foresters on ways to improve forest health

Could partner with Partners with Wildlife, NRCS programs, WUI grants, NFL grants, etc.

### **Overview of the Pritzlaff Ranch**

3,300 acre non-profit ranch that is owned by the Biophilia Foundation. It used to be a working cattle and horse ranch, and has a TNC conservation easement in place. It currently has a very active stewardship plan, with thinning and Rx Fire projects with Bob Lineback as a consultant and the NM FWRI advising. The goal is to restore the natural variability of the ranch

### **Committee Reports:**

**Law and Policy** – John Tunberg, presented by Kent. NM State Forestry is given jurisdiction under NM law for all fire management on private and state lands. Policies and procedures are in place at State Forestry that allow them to recognize prescribed fire. They are one of the groups that must be notified of prescribed fires on state and private lands. They can deny permission for a prescribed fire. The New Mexico Environment Department, through the Air Quality Bureau, manages smoke and particulate matter generated as part of a prescribed fire.

Liability is uncertain when it comes to prescribed burns. The more progressive states look to Florida's prescribed fire law as a model to encourage the use of prescribed fire. The Florida statute recognizes prescribed burning as a useful land management tool. New statutes in several states specifically promote the use of Certified Prescribed Burn Managers by limiting landowner liability if certified burn managers are present, or requiring them to be present as a condition of permit issuance. New Mexico statutory law requires landowners to reduce excessive fuel loads to reduce the possibility of wildfires. Some studies conclude these regulations increase costs but make the legal standard much clearer and reduce the associated liability uncertainties on landowners.

**Smoke** – Doug Cram (presented by Lisa Bye). The Air Quality Bureau is revising the first (2004) smoke rule revision, established in 2004. The working group for the revision included academia, landowners, agencies, private interests, and the Council. The state is still operating under the 2004 rule, but is working on changes to make the rule more efficient and effective. No real changes are expected on the prescribed fire side, but wildfire terminology has changed, and reconciling that language among the agencies is taking place. The new regulations also must align with EPA rules. Revisions need to be approved by the NM Environmental Improvement Board; because of a new Governor and new membership in the EIB, the AQB was not able to get this onto the review schedule, and will operate under the old rule until the revision can be approved. Issues: Funding is not available for some of the reporting requirements, and monitoring will be very difficult (example: as bad as the smoke from the Wallow Fire, with existing monitoring equipment, Albuquerque air quality was out of compliance only 3 days, Santa Fe only twice. )

**Website** – Jeremy Kruger. We have a page on the website all *aboutwatersheds.org*, which is supported by NM FWRI. We are looking for content to build a stand-alone website where we can post info, links, calendars, etc. We need funds to continue, and need to look for ways to raise operational funds.

**Site Visits** - Gabe Partido - could not make meeting

**Training** – Orlando Romero – could not make meeting

**Public Information** – Dan Ware – could not make meeting

**Public support list** – The Council is working to maintain a list of people who support RX fire in the state and could be enlisted to make calls when RX fires are in the news in support. The Air Quality Bureau of NMED supports RX fire but we need to build the support. Kent asked the group to provide Doug and him with contact information of anyone who would be interested. What we would like to do is build a support group to combat the non-supporters, with positive calls, etc. Doug is building an e-mail list of tree farmers, but they may not all support RX fires.

**Special Presentation: Barb Wolfson – Southwest Fire Science Consortium**, gave a great presentation about what the SFSC can do and offered any assistance and possible funding. Several handouts were made available to the group and are part of this record (see attached)

### **Business:**

Elections – current officers are ok with serving another year with the executive committee

Kent Reid - Chairman

Les – Chair-Elect

Doug – Secretary

Jeremy - Treasurer

Joe Stehling moved to accept the above officers by acclamation, Don Kearney 2<sup>nd</sup> it, vote was unanimous.

The full Steering Committee has room for 13 members. Only eight were currently serving, and no current members represented Private interests. From the floor, three potential private representatives were selected: Bob Lineback, Ron Ortega, and Brent Racher. Jim Norwich will replace Brian Henington as a Government representative. The above representatives were approved by acclamation.

Partners for Wildlife will steer interested landowners to the RX Council.

Action Items for 2012:

1. Meet to follow up on the embedded fuels treatment laws.
2. Start working on educating lawmakers on a Right-to-burn law, in order to introduce legislation at some future point.
3. Certified burners, move in that direction, standards to be recognized, look for limitations to liabilities.
4. Pursue a presentation at the meeting of the NM Association of Counties in June 2012 at NM Highlands, as a start to making the counties aware of the benefits of Rx Fire.
5. Pursue the active involvement of NM State Forestry in prescribed fire. Work to clarify the issues with the anti-donation clause and the current interpretation that when State Forestry is involved, the division could be held liable as well as responsible.
6. Look for ways to help landowners accomplish Rx Burns.

Lunch was provided by the NM Tree Farm Committee as part of a capacity building grant to get more tree farmers involved in forest management activities and attend training opportunities such as this.

Group then walked over to the tour site and had great discussions on the various prescriptions applied by NMFWR, as well as the prescribed fire and escaped prescribed fire (this got snowed out after dark).

Submitted by Doug Boykin, Secretary