



Prescribed Burn Associations: Landowners Helping Landowners

By Brett Cooper, Private Lands Biologist



Prescribed burning is one of the most cost-effective management practices to improve wildlife habitat. In fact, noticeable habitat improvements

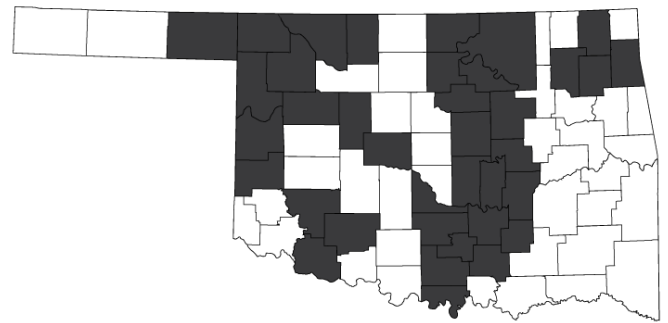
can be observed after just a single burn. However, land managers seeing the improvements first-hand rarely decide to stop at just one burn. They see what prescribed burning can do for their land, wildlife, and livestock, and want more. Thankfully, burn associations occur nearly statewide to assist.

The Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association (OPBA) was created in 2010 to support local burn associations and develop more across Oklahoma. There are currently 22 burn associations in 36 counties with the newest being established in Alfalfa County. In short, burn associations are landowners helping other landowners plan for and complete prescribed burns on private land. Associations not only have tools and equipment to assist, but also have invaluable experience to help landowners prepare and

complete each burn project.

John Weir, OSU associate extension specialist, reported 126 prescribed burns in 18 counties, resulting in 29,699 acres burned in 2019. While the majority of prescribed burns typically occur from winter to early spring, an increasing number of summer and early fall burns are occurring each year. These growing season burns behave differently than dormant season burns and result in a wildlife-friendly mosaic on the landscape which benefits species like bobwhite quail. Growing season burns are often safer and easier to complete when compared with dormant season burns and offer a larger window of opportunity to enhance wildlife habitat through burning.

The OPBA website has detailed information for landowners wishing to start a new burn association in their county or find information on existing associations to join. The website also has numerous resources that provide education and training on weather and smoke, local PBA's, laws and regulations, fire planning, and equipment vendors.



Oklahoma counties with prescribed burn associations. More information at ok-pba.org.

In addition, the OPBA has regional coordinators that are available to assist with getting started burning and preparing burn plans:

- Seth Coffey 580-504-9709 (South Central)
- Harry Fritzler 405-308-6339 (Central)
- Ken Gee 580-319-8440 (South)
- John Mustain 405-762-6627 (North)
- Derril Putnam 405-740-8327 (West).

To help the OPBA stay up-to-date on all burns that are conducted, including those not completed through a PBA, an online Burn Entry Form is available by visiting ok-pba.org.

Whether the goal is to enhance land for livestock or habitat for wildlife, prescribed burning is a great tool to consider for properties of all sizes. Assistance is also readily available for all who wish to learn more or get started.