

Ice Age Trail Alliance's Policy and Procedures for Prescribed Burning

Revised January 7th, 2020

I. INTRODUCTION

The Alliance's mission to 'create support and protect' the Ice Age National Scenic Trail includes ecological management for the benefit of user experience. Thusly, the Alliance uses a variety of tools for vegetative management practices including prescribed burning.

In December 2018, the Alliance obtained prescribed burn insurance coverage with its liability policy. The Alliance has significant assets including land, buildings, tools and equipment. The insurance policy is meant to protect these assets. Very few prescribed fires have caused property damage due to careful planning, training, and the experience of burn crews and their leaders. However, there is no guarantee if all precautions are taken to have safe, controlled burns, that the Alliance will not be sued in conjunction with prescribed fire. The prescribed burn insurance is called upon in the event that a lawsuit comes against the Alliance, in whole or part, for damages caused by an Alliance run prescribed fire; individuals may also be named in any suit.

To ensure insurance coverage and public trust, the prescribed burn policy and procedures must be followed by Alliance staff and volunteers at all times. The policy addresses how to perform a safe prescribed burn. *It also includes a checklist to ensure the participants have all the information they need before lighting a match.*

The Alliance relies heavily upon volunteers to conduct prescribed burns. The purpose of this policy is to improve burn safety and volunteer experience by minimizing risk of escaped fire and injury to personnel and property. Any burn conducted by Alliance staff or volunteers that does not comply with the following policies and procedures will not be considered an Alliance sanctioned burn, and thus will not be covered by the Alliance's insurance, nor can the Alliance be held liable for such burns.

*This policy does not apply to volunteer activities connected to the National Park Service. Per NPS-IATR's Job Description under the category of Vegetation Management: *"The use of burning or prescribed fire is not authorized for volunteer activities performed under the National Park Service's Volunteers-In-Parks Program at Ice Age National Scenic Trail."* Volunteers participating in prescribed fire with the Alliance will not be considered VIP volunteers with the NPS, therefore VIP coverage will not apply to any fire-related volunteer activities unless the volunteer is 'red carded' by having all the necessary and relevant trainings and abilities as required for federal employees.

II. ALLIANCE-SANTIONED BURNS

Any burn, that is (1) using Alliance resources (including equipment and communication networks to solicit and organize volunteers), and (2) is following all Alliance policies and procedures regarding prescribed burns, and (3) is authorized by Alliance staff, is considered an Alliance sanctioned burn. Alliance resources may not be used on non-Alliance sanctioned burns. Individuals conducting burns and not complying with the policies and procedures set forth here are not covered by the Alliance's insurance and thus may be held personally liable for damages resulting from their actions unless

otherwise covered by other agencies or organizations while performing services for said agency/organization.

III. BURN BANS

No burn may be conducted when a burn ban is in place, or when an air quality particulates alert is in place for the area in which the burn is to take place.

IV. BURN PERMITS

The burn must meet all jurisdictional requirements for conducting burns, including obtaining burn permits where required.

V. BRUSH PILE BURNING

Concentrations of brush and slash that will remain hot for no more than 15 hours may be burned when there is adequate moisture in surrounding fuels, up to 50 feet out, to prevent spread of the fire. The limiting conditions for prescribed burning a combination of the following: relative humidity less than 50%, temperature greater than 40 degrees, and sustained wind greater than 25 mph. No burning of brush piles is permitted at any time if all three of these limiting conditions are met. Burning can occur *at the discretion of Alliance staff* if any one, or combination of two, of the limiting factors are present.

Piles with large amounts of wood can remain hot for several days. When the fuel load in the burn pile is sufficient to cause the fire to remain hot for more than 15 hours, there must be sufficient snow cover on the ground to safely contain the fire for no less than 2.5 days (60 hours) from the time the last fuel is placed onto the fire. Only clean woody material may be placed in the burn pile. Special care must be taken with unburned brush/slash piles within the boundaries of a broadcast prescribed burn by limiting their size, their number and ensuring they are more than 50 feet from the edge of the burn unit. Debris and leaf litter should be raked or blown away from brush piles before ignition.

A cell phone and first-aid kit must be on site when the slash piles are burned. No one may work alone. Check on local requirements and permits that may differ from this procedure. For tips on building brush piles, see the Alliance's Tips for Safe & Effective Brush Piles handout.

Personal Safety Gear at Burn Piles

The following is required of all participants within 20 feet of burn piles:

- Gloves – leather work gloves
- Clothing – non-synthetic natural fibers only (long-sleeved and long-legged)
- Before using a chainsaw, see the Alliance's Power Equipment Policy for safety gear and procedure requirements such as PPE use and fire extinguisher.

The following safety gear is *highly recommended* and must be offered to volunteers:

- Eye protection – safety glasses, goggles, or face-shield
- Hard hat

VI. BROADCAST BURNING

Broadcast burning is distinguished as the use of prescribed fire that is not contained to a single managed pile of burning debris. It is used in both prairie and savannah ecosystems, as well as open oak woodlands and other fire tolerant forested areas with enough fuel. The primary objective of broadcast burning is to reduce undesirable woody growth in these areas by killing or stunting young plants. Broadcast burning requires additional planning, personnel, training and equipment – compared to brush pile burning.

Broadcast Burn Training

Crew Classification & Requirements

Burn Boss shall:

- Meet all Crew Member and Line Boss requirements as described under these classifications (see below).
- Have served as a Line Boss 10 or more times in a variety of habitats (i.e. prairie - woodlands).
- Have participated in 30 or more burns.
- In addition to the course required for Crew Member and Line Boss, also has certificates for NWCG course S-290.
- Have had formal training or certification under one of the following:
 - Has their experience and training reviewed by IATA staff and is authorized by IATA staff as burn boss qualified for IATA burns or
 - Meets the training requirements for a burn boss of the state conservation agency of the state in which the burn is taking place (must provide documentation), or,
 - Has certification under the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards to be a burn boss (must provide certificate to Alliance staff),

Line Boss must:

- Meet Crew Member requirements as described under that classification
- Have participated in 10 or more burns.
- Has National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) certificates for courses S-130/S-190& S-234.
- Have had formal training or certification under one of the following:
 - Has their experience and training reviewed by IATA staff and is authorized by IATA staff as Line Boss-qualified for IATA burns or
 - Meets the training requirements for a crew leader of the state conservation agency of the state in which the burn is taking place (must provide documentation).

Crew Member must:

- Have participated in 2 or more burns.
- Have had formal training or certification under one of the following:
 - Formal basic crew member training following as approved by IATA staff, or
 - NWCG certificates for courses S-190/S-130, or
 - Meet the training requirements for a basic crew member of the state conservation agency of the state in which the burn is taking place

Apprentices:

- Have formal crew line training as described under Crew Member requirements but have not yet participated in at least 2 burns.

Observers:

- No formal training or burn experience required.

Pumps and Engines:

- All operators of pumps and engines must have training on the use and operation of comparable equipment prior to the day of the burn.
- On the day of the burn, all crew members on a burn must be given an orientation on the equipment present at the burn.

Qualification Requirements for Burn Crew

- Every burn must have a qualified Burn Boss in charge of the burn (See Crew Classifications & Requirements).
- Every burn must have a qualified Crew Leader in charge of each crew on the burn (See Crew Classifications & Requirements). Crews may not exceed 6 individuals in size (excluding the crew leader). On small burns with 8 or fewer people, the Burn Boss may also function as a Crew Leader.
- No more than 25% and up to 4 maximum of the total crew may be in the Apprentice category (See Crew Classifications & Requirements). Every Apprentice must be paired with an experienced Crew Member.
- There may be no more than 3 Observers (See Crew Classifications & Requirements) present on a burn. Observers may not be given assignments in the conducting of the burn. They may, however, help with loading and carrying equipment and supplies. They must be assigned to an experienced crew member, and they must shadow and observe that person at all times.

Burn Plans

A written and approved burn plan must be on file for every broadcast burn prior to ignition. The burn must be conducted within the parameters set forth in the plan. The plan must follow the standard Alliance burn plan format. Once a plan is approved, it is good for a period of three years, so long as no changes have occurred to the site which would affect the burn, and, if acceptable to the managing authority.

Burn Plan Approval Process

Any Alliance volunteers or staff who meets the qualifications of a Burn Boss may submit a burn plan. All Alliance burn plans are to be submitted by the burn plan author to the appropriate approving Alliance staff and, if applicable, to the managing authority of the land to be burned, for signed approval. The Alliance staff's decision will be based on a) input from other burn professionals, b) qualifications of the crew, and, c) potential risks.

All plans must be submitted no later than March 1st of a year if planning to have the burn that same year. Plan approval shall last three years. For plans approved in previous years, a list of those planned broadcast fires for that year must be provided to Alliance staff no later than March 1st. Submission of plans after March 1st of each year may result in authorization being withheld. Burn plans that need revision are to be returned to the author with suggested revisions, and a revised version resubmitted to the approving authority for approval. Approved (signed) burn plans are returned to the plan's author to be used at the burn, and a copy retained in the Alliance's files. In rare cases of extenuating circumstances that do not allow enough time for transmittal of signed documents, approval may be granted by the approving authority to the

plan's author via e-mail.

Go-no-Go Checklist

On the day of the burn and prior to ignition, the burn boss must review each item on the Alliance's standard *Go-no-Go Checklist* and sign and date the form. This must be done for each burn. Multiple burns at the same location on the same day, and with similar complexity and conditions, may be covered by a single Go-no-Go Checklist.

Crew Sign-in

Every participant on a burn must be signed in (both legible printing of their name and signature) on an event form and indicate their participation level (e.g. Burn Boss, Crew Leader, Crew Member, Apprentice, or Observer) for each burn. For multiple burns in a day, one sign-in sheet may be used with a column for each of the burns. Each member must also provide an emergency contact number on the sign-in sheet. These sign-in sheets must be kept by the burn boss and turned-into the Alliance office after the burn season. These records must be kept on file with the chapter, and a copy submitted to the central files.

Post-Burn Result Report

Upon completion of each burn, a burn report form must be filled-out and signed by the burn boss before the end of that day. The report must follow the standard Alliance burn report and include the signed Go-No-Go checklist. Copies of the report must be retained by the burn boss until the burn plan expires and a copy must be sent to Alliance staff (electronic preferred).

General Safety Equipment

The following *must* be present at every burn:

- Access to a phone. Check cell coverage as part of the planning process. If there is no service on site, locate the nearest point of cell coverage and include it in the burn plan.
- Two-way radios, when Burn Boss and Crew Leaders are not within speaking distance of each other. When radios are required, at minimum there should be a radio for the Burn Boss and each Crew Leader. It is preferred each Crew Member have a radio.
- First aid kit specific for fire.
- Fire suppression equipment as out-lined in the burn plan.
- If power equipment is present, all appropriate PPEs.

Personal Safety Gear

Required:

- Leather boots – 6" high tops minimum.
- Gloves – leather work gloves.
- Clothing - non-synthetic natural fibers only (long-sleeved shirts and long pants required). Nomex or equivalent is highly recommended.
- Drinking water on site.
- Hard hat - long hair must be covered up.
- Before using a chain saw, see Power Equipment Policy for safety gear and procedure requirements.
- Hearing protection when using loud equipment.

Suggested:

- Leather boots with minimum of 8" high tops.
- Eye protection – goggles or safety glasses.
- Air filter mask or bandana.
- Hardhat (highly recommended).
- Radio for every crew member.
- Neck shroud.
- Drinking water on every person.

Physical Fitness Requirements (Volunteer Release)

Volunteers must be asked to do a self-assessment of their physical ability. They must be asked to read a self-assessment release statement and waiver of liability provided on the volunteer sign-in sheet, and be informed that signing the form is acceptance of the waiver. All participants must be 16 years of age or older. Those under 18 years of age must have parent/guardian signature on the release form.

Annual Refresher (Lessons Learned)

Each volunteer group that conducts burns should offer to their burn volunteers once a year a refresher or lessons-learned meeting to go over examples of burns where things have gone wrong, and to get updates on prescribed burn issues and changes in IATA burn policies and procedures. These can be refreshers put on by IATA or conservation partners such as TPE, TNC, WDNR, and others, so long as any changes in IATA burn policies and procedures are covered at the meeting. Volunteers should be encouraged to attend, but attendance is not required to stay qualified. Volunteers that do attend should sign in to document their participation. Volunteer leaders and burn bosses must provide, to all volunteers that do not attend, a summary of the refresher's content.

Road Signage & Traffic Control

If a burn is near a road, signs should be placed along the road informing passersby that a prescribed burn is in progress. If you anticipate need to control traffic, all state regulations and rules for traffic control signage and procedures must be followed. Contact the appropriate State DOT and local police authority to learn what is required or allowed.

Loaning out of Alliance Burn Equipment

Not applicable.

Burning on lands not owned, leased, or eased by the Alliance

When burning on land not owned by the Alliance, the managing authority/landowner must also sign the burn plan and a form that grants the Alliance permission to conduct the burn. The Landowner Agreement, Assumption of Liability, and Permission to Burn forms must be approved by the Alliance prior to the burn.

It is also possible that when burning on land not owned by the Alliance, there is a formal written management agreement with the managing authority that specifically grants the Alliance permission to conduct prescribed burns. In this case, there may not need to be a separate Permission to Burn form

signed by the landowner.

Database of Burn Volunteer Training/Experience

The Alliance will maintain a database of all burn volunteers and staff documenting the training and experience of the participants. If course certificates are available, copies must be on file in the central office. Volunteers must compile and submit this information on forms provide by the Alliance staff.

Burn Policy and Procedures Addenda

- Alliance Burn Plan form
- Alliance Go-No-Go Checklist and Post-burn Report form
- Alliance Burn Crew Sign-in & Liability Waiver sheet including self-assessment (forthcoming)
- Workday sign-in sheet

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GO/NO GO CHECKLIST

Site Name: _____ Date of Burn: __

Present conditions:

Wind Direction__ Wind Speed__ Relative Humidity____ Temperature _____

- Above weather parameters are within burn plan prescription.
- All current and projected fire weather forecasts have been obtained and are favorable. All necessary permits and approvals have been obtained.
- All burn plan personnel are on site.
- All personnel have appropriate personal protection equipment.
- All personnel have been briefed, and are aware of their assignments and the burn unit.
- All personnel are aware of the objectives, ignition plan, extra resources, escape routes, and safety zones.
- All personnel accept their respective assignments.
- Adequate burn map provided to all personnel.
- All smoke management specifications are met and addressed.
- All of the necessary equipment is available and operational.
- The contingency plan and available resources have been discussed and are available.
- The burn can be carried out according to the Burn Plan, and will meet the planned objectives.
- All pre-burn contacts have been made (dispatcher/local fire department).
- A test fire has been conducted and conditions are deemed safe enough to continue.

Burn Boss Signature

Date

Time of ignition

POST-BURN RESULTS (DAY OF BURN)

Time fire was ignited: _____

Time fire was completed and out: _____

Were Burn Objectives Met (address specific objectives listed in the burn plan; e.g., % acreage burned, scorching of woody species)?

Fire Behavior (e.g., rate of spread, flame lengths, spot fires): _____

Recommended Changes (e.g., adequacy of firebreaks, crew size sufficiency): _____

Addition Comments:
