



**OKLAHOMA PRESCRIBED BURN ASSOCIATION
BOARD MEETING
AUGUST 20, 2013
12:00 PM – 2:45 PM
ROMAN NOSE STATE PARK**

DRAFT MINUTES – 8/20/13

LOCATION: Roman Nose State Park, Watonga, OK

PRESENT:

John Weir, OSU Extension/Chairperson
Russell Stevens, Noble Foundation/Interim Executive Director
Darrel Dominick, OCC/OPBA – Sec/Treasurer
Verlin Hart, Cross Timbers PBA
Karsen Davis, Roger Mills PBA
Bill Inman, Creek County PBA
Paul Clark, NRCS, Taloga
Alva Gregory, ODWC, Woodward

ABSENT:

Note: Ron Voth has indicated he would no longer be able to participate with OPBA due to personal considerations.

Guests:

Weir introduced the guests and each spoke briefly to the BOD.
Mike Thralls, Executive Director, OCC
Harry Fritzier, NRCS Liaison to OPBA

CALL TO ORDER: John Weir called the meeting to order and welcomed the participants. Weir provided an agenda.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Thralls and Fritzier were introduced. Weir thanked Thralls for his and OCC's leadership and support of OPBA. Weir briefly explained Fritzier's role with OPBA and described the meeting (8/7/13) with Gary O'Neil, STC NRCS, and Steve Glasgow, SRC NRCS, on getting this to happen.

DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW/APPROVAL:

Weir led the board in review of the previous meeting minutes (3/14/13). Time was provided for review and there was no discussion. Davis offered a first to accept the minutes as written. This was seconded by Inman. All present signified approval.

OPBA CORRESPONDENCE REPORT:

Dominick did not provide a report.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

The financial report from 3/14/13 to 8/20/13 was presented and reviewed. The balance is \$21,220.62. Dominick explained all expenses listed. Davis asked about a statement on the report next to "NOTE:" and Dominick indicated the last report had several training scholarship checks not cashed and all have now been cashed after repeated follow-up. Dominick also indicated that one LPBA that was provided a \$250 scholarship check to attend training declined the funds so the check was voided. Inman made a motion to accept the financial report and this was seconded by Davis. It was approved by the BODs by voice vote.

REPORTS AND OLD BUSINESS –

• **QUARTERLY REPORTS:**

Dominick reported on the reports for the NRCS agreement and PLJV capacity grant.

- NRCS Agreement - Dominick indicated that monthly reports have been completed and submitted to NRCS as required by the agreement. Dominick also indicated that the SF-270, request for reimbursement form with supporting documents, has been submitted and these reimbursements have appeared on the financial statements. The supporting documents provide details concerning the trainings and costs. Dominick indicated that there is \$1000 left in the agreement and this will not be requested but carried over. NRCS has agreed to extend the agreement and indicated it may be for \$25,000 for FY14.
- PLJV Capacity Grant - Dominick indicated an extensive report was submitted to PLJV, as required by the grant, in May 2013. PLJV indicated the report was good and satisfied the requirements. Dominick also told the BOD that he had submitted another invoice to PLJV for \$7722.00 for the second half of the grant for 2013. This was requested by PLJV.

- **NOBLE FOUNDATION REPORT:**
Stevens described the quarterly report required by the agreement. This report was completed by Dominick, Weir and Stevens and submitted in June. The report was very impressive and highlighted the seminar/field trainings and online training effort.
- **INSURANCE – BOD AND PBA LIABILITY:**
Stevens indicated the OPBA BOD had liability coverage purchased through the Bramlett Agency in Ardmore. The cost of this coverage is listed on the financial statement. Stevens also indicated he is working with the Bramlett Agency to extend the OPBA BOD general liability coverage over to member LPBA BOD's. This will require additional cost. Stevens told the BOD that this could be done as he had received an email from the Bramlett Agency prior to the meeting. Weir indicated that this could be a member benefit provided by OPBA.
- **PLJV GRANT:**
Dominick discussed the PLJV Capacity Grant in more detail (see information above under Quarterly Reports). Dominick indicated the first invoice payment had been held up due to federal sequestration but it showed up and is reflected in the financial report. Another invoice has been requested and was prepared and submitted yesterday to PLJV. Dominick said the PLJV staff confirmed receipt of the \$7722.00 invoice for processing. The training, organizing and working to form and support LPBAs is what we need to continue to do to keep in good standing with this grant.
- **NFWF GRANT:**
Stevens provided the BOD with a hard copy of the grant application to the NFWF. Weir discussed that the grant is for \$250,000 for two years (2014-2016) to hire an Executive Director and four regional coordinators to work with LPBAs. The handout shows \$528,000 in matching contributions. Stevens indicated that the Noble Foundation has a positive working relationship with the NFWF and expects us to receive notice by the end of this month. Weir discussed timelines and requirements.
- **NRCS UPDATE:**
 - See information above under "Quarterly Reports" for details about the current agreement and what NRCS has indicated they will do to extend the agreement in FY14.
 - Dominick briefly discussed the APBA position paper presented to Gary O'Neill, NRCS STC, and Steve Glasgow, NRCS SRC, which has resulted in NRCS appointing Harry Fritzier, Grazing Land Specialist, as their liaison to OPBA and to work to promote the implementation and training needed to achieve more prescribed fire by working with NRCS employees, LPBAs and OPBA.
- **ALLIANCE FOR PRESCRIBED BURN ASSOCIATIONS (APBA – NE, KS, OK, TX):**
 - Weir discussed the activities of this group which met May 30, 2013 at Arcadia Lake, Edmond. This was the third meeting of the APBA and has been an effort to share and support this important initiative in the states. Oklahoma is looked at as the primary leader of this group currently.
 - Weir discussed that the NRCS position paper (handout provided), mentioned earlier by Dominick, had come out of this meeting and was being presented to the NRCS state conservationists. The paper was also going to be presented to the acting regional conservationist and possibly the Chief. The position paper focuses on the need to have NRCS employees trained in prescribed fire and working with LPBAs in getting more fire on the landscape. Weir indicated that survey results have shown that most producers go to NRCS for prescribed fire information and burn plans. The position paper encourages NRCS to embrace this role and assist more in promoting and utilizing fire.
 - Weir briefly discussed the "Online Basic Prescribed Fire Training" that is now available and being promoted by APBA.
- **NWTF GRANT:**
Weir provided a handout of the grant application. Last year the NWTF provided OPBA \$2500.00. Weir indicated he had applied for \$5000.00 this year. Weir is working with Gene Miller.
- **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:**
 - Stevens discussed working with Deer Management Associations and their interest in prescribed fire, possible technical assistance and financial help for OPBA.
 - Gregory briefly discussed the need to engage the School Land Commission in more active cedar control with prescribed fire and that an education process needs to take place concerning hunting leases and that better habitat, for species such as deer, is not solid cedar cover.

NEW BUSINESS –

- **LOCAL PBAs WORKING UNDER OPBA'S 501(c)3:**
Weir started the discussion concerning this topic and the pluses this would have for local PBAs to join OPBA and not have to go through the non-profit effort with IRS. Weir and Davis mentioned the opportunity for local people and groups earmarking donations to their local PBAs through OPBA and receiving that benefit for tax purposes. Stevens, working with Noble Foundation attorneys, provided the following handouts on this subject:
 - IRS Publication 557 – Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization
 - A. GROUP EXEMPTION PROCESS

- > GROUP EXEMPTION PROS AND CONS
- > Affiliation Agreement [example](#)

Stevens explained that local PBAs coming under the umbrella of OPBA would have to become a subordinate of OPBA by signing an affiliation agreement (NF will help draft), adopting the bylaws, accounting requirements, reporting requirements, etc. to stay in good standing and not jeopardize OPBA's non-profit status. This effort will require the local PBAs to get incorporated within Oklahoma (\$25 fee; requires wording that OPBA needs to guide each on before submitting) and an EIN. Inman indicated that the local PBA he represents (Creek Co. PBA) had received the 501(c)5 tax exempt status. Stevens said any taxable income that a local PBA had would have to be dealt with by them. Dominick recommended that before this happens that the OPBA BOD have a sit down meeting with the Noble Foundation's attorneys/accountants to make sure there is a clear understanding of what is required and needed so as to not jeopardize the OPBA's non-profit status. Hart recommended that this opportunity should be reflected in the updated bylaws.

- **ODWC FUNDING:**

Weir discussed current efforts to secure funding from the ODWC. Weir indicated he had worked with Steve Conrady, ODWC NW Regional Supervisor, on an agreement between OPBA and the ODWC. Weir and Gregory both indicated that Conrady had gone above and beyond the call of duty to secure this funding. The OPBA and prescribed fire are listed as key actions needed in Oklahoma's LPC plan. Weir indicated this agreement will be for \$25,000.00 annually and is a budgeted item. Weir indicated that the OPBA BOD formally recognize Conrady for his support in the future.

- **RADIO GRANT/STATEWIDE FREQUENCY:**

Weir discussed the opportunity OPBA was provided via OCC and the Payne Co. CD. OCC received USFWS funds and these will be utilized to purchase high end radios for local PBAs. Weir and Dominick thanked Thralls for his support of the OPBA and willingness to make things work with such funds. There is approximately \$26,000.00 to purchase high end radios and related equipment. The discussion also focused on the need to hold the radios and provide them to local PBAs that join the OPBA and this is part of the benefit.

Inman was thanked for his work in completing the task of getting a dedicated frequency through the FCC for prescribed fire for the state. Inman and Weir will check to see if the frequency can be used region wide for prescribed fire. Radios will need to be tuned to this frequency.

Weir discussed that a company in Oklahoma City (OneLink Wireless – see handout on various pricing possibilities) or one in Edmond seems to be the best place to purchase. Inman has used one of these and purchased radios for the Creek County PBA. The radios to be purchased are Motorolas used by police, fire and rescue and are rechargeable with lithium batteries.

The BOD decided to move forward with the purchase and buy as many radios as possible without the multi-charging station since each comes with an individual charger. Fritzler asked about reprogramming the NRCS radios and what that would cost. Inman indicated the company they have worked with will do it for \$75/hr. and can do one radio every 3-5 minutes. Davis indicated they have a member of the Roger Mills PBA that is a HAM radio operator with the software and does it for them.

- **BURN TRAILERS:**

Weir indicated he has two fully equipped burn trailers ready to go to local PBAs. Weir wants to place decals of all the partners sponsoring this effort on each trailer. Davis indicated he was willing to work on this effort through his print shop. Weir also indicated that the burn trailers were shown on the OSU SUNUP television program this past week.

- **NEBRASKA PRESCRIBED FIRE CONFERENCE AND PBA ORGANIZATION:**

Weir indicated he had attended and presented at the above mentioned conference in July. Weir also indicated he was disappointed because the NRCS employees that helped organize the conference were not given permission to go on government time and expense. There were approximately 100 in attendance. A statewide organization similar to OPBA is being formed. Weir also commented that Pheasants Forever have been exceptional partners in NE when it comes to prescribed fire and habitat improvement.

- **ONLINE TRAINING:**

The "Online Basic Prescribed Fire Training" is up and running Weir indicated. Weir said there are 90 participants enrolled. Davis indicated he had completed the course and it was thorough. Weir said he has placed OK, NE, and KS laws on the site so participants from those states have access to the laws pertaining to their location. Weir indicated that Jennifer Evans, NC State University Extension, had contacted him and was charged with developing such a course. Evans indicated they are just going to link to this training and add NC specifics to it with their laws and smoke management requirements.

Weir indicated enrollees are from Canada, WY, CA, MN, MI, OK and TX. Weir also discussed the APBA position paper presented to NRCS and that this online training was going to be a prerequisite for NRCS employees before more advanced training. NE has also indicated they will do the same. Chuck Stanley, National Fire Ecologist for NRCS, has indicated it will be adopted as the prerequisite for all NRCS employees going to advanced training. The Tulsa District Corps of Engineers has also indicated they are going to require this training also.

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John Weir 8/23/13 7:59 AM

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• **NEW PBAs:**

Weir asked the BOD if there are any leads on new ones to be formed. Gregory indicated that Beaver County is ready and one at Quinlan. Stevens indicated he and Ken Gee are working with a group south of Ada and will work to get them to possibly unite with the Pontotoc Ridge PBA. Stevens is also working with QDMA on forming new ones near Okmulgee and Butler, OK.

• **QUAIL FOREVER GRANT:**

Quail Forever has been a big supporter of prescribed fire. In the past, they have assisted Weir in the purchase of two burn trailers. Weir is working with the "89er" Chapter in Edmond and has submitted a request for \$10,000.00.

• **AREA DIRECTORS/NW OK:**

Weir discussed the need to start thinking about "boots on the ground" in the form of an Executive Director and Area Directors when the NFWF grant happens. These will probably be part-time contract type employees that will work with existing LPBAs and new ones to help get this effort going. Weir indicated the need to find assistance in NW OK in the LPC area. Contracts with position descriptions need to be developed. Dominick indicated a willingness to work on these PDs.

Hart asked about the need to establish a dues structure for LPBAs to join OPBA. Weir indicated there will be more need for discussion of this item, bylaws and the positions. Weir continued by stating that there could be a possibility of a \$250/yr. flat rate for LPBAs to join OPBA. Producers not close to a LPBA could also join for a fee to be determined.

Davis indicated that LPBA membership fluctuates based on years that people want to burn and this must be taken into consideration. Davis indicated that having additional prescribed fire liability insurance would drive people to join. Clark indicated that the right approach to the LPBA will be needed for them to join OPBA. Stevens indicated that several insurance underwriters are ready to engage and provide the liability insurance coverage for prescribed fire. The price for the product is not yet known and they are waiting for us to get organized and increase membership.

• **WHO DO WE NEED TO GO VISIT?:**

Weir indicated we have come a long ways in the past two years and the hard work is paying off. Weir said there will be a need for us to promote and market the OPBA at the local level. Gregory said we needed to promote at fall meetings (ex. NW Cattlemen's) of many groups involved with conservation issues including LPBAs. Clark recommended possibly having a booth at the Wildlife Expo. Gregory said the Wildlife Expo is not going to be held this year because of a commitment to support another event.

Stevens said we needed a brochure to use and distribute. Davis indicated he would help with this and print it for OPBA. Weir handed out a one pager we have been using and this could be the basis for a tri-fold brochure with photos and contact information.

Stevens indicated he is working to secure a source to develop a website for OPBA with the information on it, links to the online training, and a place that will be interactive in support of LPBAs and OPBA reporting requirements. Weir indicated the need for links to weather, calendar for meetings and burns, and trainings.

• **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?:**

Weir asked the BOD about next steps. Davis indicated the need to establish dues structures for LPBAs to join and continue to work to support the needs of the local PBAs.

Gregory indicated his work in NW OK dealing with the LPC habitat could lead this next year to over 60,000 acres being burned.

Weir and Stevens met last week with representatives from AGREN, a web-based Iowa company, which designs templates for agriculture work. This company has a new product that will produce prescribed burn plans. Thralls indicated he had also heard a presentation from them and it is interesting. Weir and Stevens indicated they would send an email out to the BOD on how to access this web-based application. The cost to access through a license will be in the \$35,000/year range and groups will need to group together to fund.

Stevens said the Noble Foundation has provided OPBA with a laptop and tablet. Stevens has these in his possession and is using the laptop. This is part of the services agreement between NF and OPBA.

Stevens indicated the NWTf is meeting 9/25/13 and a push for them nationally is "Save the habitat....Save the hunt" and that prescribed fire is a major part of this campaign.

Fritzler took over the meeting and said that he understood his new role to be whatever Dominick said. It was explained to him that 50% of his time would be spent working with OPBA, LPBAs and NRCS employees on the ground. The entire BOD welcomed Fritzler to the group and appreciated the NRCS commitment to this effort. Dominick indicated there will need to be something sent out from the NRCS state office on Fritzler's new role and the commitment to supporting this effort statewide. Fritzler indicated a real enthusiasm for this new role and that he is ready to get to work and do whatever he is told to do.

Weir indicated we would need to meet again by mid-September especially if the NFWF grant is awarded.

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John Weir 8/23/13 8:05 AM
Comment [1]: Yeah right, I think he is smarter than that!

Stevens made sure the BOD had the current bylaws and the proposed simplified ones so they can compare, comment and discuss at the next meeting. Stevens indicated we would need to review the operating handbook also and make sure it lines up with the new bylaws.

MEETING ADJOURNED -

Weir entertained a motion to adjourn. Hart provided a first and Inman a second. The board agreed to adjourn at approximately 2:45 PM.

MINUTES APPROVED: 1ST _____
2ND _____

VOICE VOTE APPROVAL: YES NO

APPROVED MINUTES SUBMITTED: _____
M. DARREL DOMINICK DATE