



**OKLAHOMA PRESCRIBED BURN ASSOCIATION
BOARD MEETING
May 5, 2015
12:00 PM – 3:30 PM
H&H Shooting Sports Complex – Oklahoma City, OK**

DRAFT MINUTES – 5/5/15

LOCATION: H&H Shooting Sports Complex – Oklahoma City, OK
(NOTE: This was a working lunch meeting.)

BOD PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

None

GUESTS:

Allen Fulton, Pawnee PBA
James “Dink” Novotny, Pawnee PBA
Seth Coffey, OSU Future Grad. Student
Steve Burns, Canadian Rivers PBA
Chad Scheihiny, Canadian Rivers PBA
Kenzy Mooney, Canadian Rivers PBA
Steve Glsagow, NRCS Liaison
Brian Hajny, NW OPBA Coordinator

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

INTRODUCTIONS:

All present introduced themselves and the entity they represented. Dominick passed around a sign-in sheet.

DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW/APPROVAL:

Weir led the board in review of the previous meeting minutes provided by Dominick for the 12/1/14 BOD meeting. 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. No significant correspondence has been received since the last meeting. NOTE: Dominick should have told the BOD that thank you letters were sent to NWTF, PLJV, and Quail Forever for funding received.

FINANCIAL REPORT/TREASURER'S REPORT:

Dominick provided four monthly financial statements for each month of 2015. Dominick explained that due to OPBA now having a balance of over \$50,000 that he was going to do monthly statements. Dominick also indicated a need for additional accounting assistance for IRS purposes. The financial reports for January, February, March and April were reviewed. Hart made a motion to accept as provided. Davis seconded the motion. Weir asked for discussion and there was none. Weir asked for a voice vote for approval and that was provided by the BOD.

GRANT UPDATES:

- **PLJV:**
 - Capacity Grant – Weir discussed this grant and that on 12/2/14 \$7500 was deposited and on 4/7/15 \$7500 was deposited. This should continue another year.
 - PLJV Conoco- Phillips Grant – These funds are being used for the contract payments for Bryan Hajny. PLJV provided \$15,000 that was deposited on 2/3/15 for continued work with prescribed fire in the LPC area of OK. Weir applied again for next year and worked with Christopher Rustay. OPBA will not receive this grant again. PLJV's assistance is much appreciated.
- **USDA NRCS Agreement:** Dominick updated the BOD that OPBA and NRCS signed another agreement for FY15 and it is for \$15,000. Dominick thanked Steve Glasgow, representing NRCS and Gary O'Neill, STC, for their continued support. OPBA has received two installments under this agreement since the 12/1/14 BOD meeting. On 1/27/15, OPBA deposited \$9256 and in April 2015 another \$7822 was deposited. Dominick indicated NRCS has provided over \$25,000 under CA in the past few years. Also, Weir discussed the opportunity with RCPP and that this is open for additional proposals and OPBA would re-submit.
- **The Nature Conservancy (TNC):** Weir indicated TNC had provided \$10,000 in June 2014. This relationship continues to be very positive.
- **Quail Forever:** Weir discussed the contribution of the QF Central OK Chapter, 2nd installment, of \$5,000 that was deposited on 3/27/15. This continues to be a very positive partnership.

- **OCC/OSU:** Weir discussed the positive relationship OCC and OSU has in working together for prescribed fire. (NOTE: The agreement between these two entities works well because it is within state government.) Lisa Kanuf- Owen, Assistant Director of OCC has a great working relationship with USFWS and these funds have been used to support LPBAs through the local conservation districts. For example, OCC recently provided the Pawnee Co. PBA with \$21,000 for additional equipment purchases. Weir also stated that OCC and OSU have entered into agreement to initiate fire equipment training and develop a DVD of the safe use of such equipment. Weir indicated Seth Coffey, future grad student and in attendance today, would work on this with him. The online training will also be continued and enhanced. Weir is also looking into developing apps on the phone to be used in the field for prescribed fires.

Other grants not listed on agenda but discussed:

- **NWTF** – The NWTF has continued to support prescribed fire efforts and OPBA. Gene Miller wants to continue this relationship and advocates for our mission within the leadership of the OK NWTF. OPBA received \$4426 on 1/21/15. This partnership should be worked on and developed more.
- **ODWC** – Weir has continued work with ODWC and it has been budgeted for OPBA to receive another \$20,000 - \$25,000 this year. OPBA appreciates their continued support.

OPBA ACTIVITY REPORT:

No formal report was provided for this meeting but updates were given throughout the meeting.

WESTERN REGION COORDINATOR REPORT:

Weir indicated Hajny had done a good job. Hajny briefly updated the BOD on his activities of working with LPBAs and that it had been very busy. Weir indicated a need for “boots on the ground” in writing burn plans and encouraging landowners to do prescribed burns. Hajny discussed the liability insurance opportunity and that he had worked with several who applied for it. At first, the insurance company was slow in turn around but all thought that would improve as it became routine for all involved. Hajny indicated there is a need to do burn plans months ahead and to submit the application early. Davis asked how many policies were issued. It was thought that at least 13 and that was probably a low number.

SOUTHERN REGION COORDINATOR REPORT:

Note: Ken Gee was not in attendance but would arrive later and provide his report. Gee indicated he had sent an email out to a wide group of contacts offering his assistance and only heard back from a couple of LPBAs. A brief discussion concerned placing Hajny and Gee’s telephone number on the homepage. Gee indicated the need to start early in writing burn plans

for this fall and 2016. Gee indicated he worked with the Creek Co. PBA and Inman for a day and had contact with a group from Sulphur. Stevens reminded everyone that Hajny and Gee cannot be the burn boss but can walk next to the landowner and provide information and guidance.

There was a brief discussion for the need for more “coordinator” positions throughout OK.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Website:** Weir indicated the website is up and running. Weir asked if there are recommendations to improve it to just let him know and that it is a work in progress still. Weir indicated there may be some modifications to the screen to make it more user-friendly. There Weir indicated he was going to send out a reminder next week on reporting the burns done this year. This helps with writing reports for grants and applying for new funding sources. Over 30 burns have been reported and Weir knows there have been many more. The information is needed to make the case for the safety of prescribed fire. Weir also discussed the need for phone apps that would be helpful for in the field. Gregory indicated the need to have additional links to other websites from the OPBA homepage. Hajny indicated the need for a way to notify PBA members concerning upcoming burn. Fulton, Pawnee PBA, indicated the need to be able to retrieve data from the homepage and that a more interactive format is needed in the future which includes an opportunity to edit material. Glasgow indicated a need for summary reports by county would be helpful. Weir agreed and wants it to evolve so that the data can be sorted in different ways.
- **Liability Insurance:** Stevens indicated it was still a learning process and it was a steep learning curve for all involved. Stevens indicated he had heard that it was being purchased from Markel – Evanston Insurance Co., Dallas, TX. This company will provide liability coverage up to \$1 M for offsite damages for a cost of \$500 for two burns and then a cost of \$250 for each burn after the first two based on a calendar year. Stevens said he had talked to The Bramlett representative and 13 policies had been purchased in OK. Stevens reminded the BOD that the insurance policies are attached to the current state law and what is in OK is different than TX. Weir indicated he had had discussions with TXPBAT and they were still struggling with issues there and especially the requirement for “certifications” which is tied back into their state law. Stevens indicated that since this became available that OK Farm Bureaus has indicated they have coverage for prescribed fire. Weir indicated the need for follow-up with AFR to check on their coverage. It was recommended that customers of such companies should confirm this coverage. Davis indicated there would be a need, if there was an escape that caused damage, on which was the primary policy and which was the secondary policy in a liability claim. There is probably still a need to pull the LPBAs together to discuss liability issues.
- **Affiliation Agreements:** There was a brief discussion concerning this subject. Dominick needs to track this better for OPBA. Stevens indicated four have been accepted for the purpose of changing the status of OPBA with IRS so OPBA is the

“umbrella” 501c3 non-profit for all that join-up. This would allow them to have access to BOD liability and other benefits so they did not have to create their own non-profit. Each LPBA must complete the paperwork annually or they are on the outside of the “umbrella” of OPBA.

- **Prescribed Fire Day/Conservation Day at the Capitol:** This occurred on April 1, 2015 and was a big success. OPBA presented three awards for support of the OPBA efforts. These awards went to Harry Fritzler, NRCS (ret.), TNC, and the Noble Foundation. The award was a drip torch with an engraved plaque on it. Weir indicated his appreciation for OCC and OACD allowing OPBA to be a part of this day.
- **Accountant:** Dominick discussed the need for a CPA or CPA services due to OPBA breaking through the \$50,000 ceiling in the account. This complicates many things and help will be needed for IRS reporting purposes. Stevens discussed his work in trying to find someone to assist and do pro bono work. Davis indicated he thought we just needed to go out and pay someone to do this for us. Dominick is going to work on this again.

(There was a brief break.)

NEW BUSINESS:

Note: See agenda for discussion items. This time in the meeting was used to do a “health” check on OPBA by reviewing past accomplishments, determining where the organization is today and setting goals for the future.

Weir handed out a three page document listing accomplishments from 2010 - 2015 and a review of the initial objectives with the status of each listed. The list is impressive and is attached to these minutes in the official file. Weir indicated the need today to re-evaluate goals/objectives. Weir reviewed the first page of the handout and discussed each item. Weir then thanked the Noble Foundation for their partnership and investment, not in cash funds but in technical assistance, for helping the past three years. Dominick added that the agreement with the Noble Foundation provided OPBA with credibility and stability. The Noble Foundation does not just enter into agreement with every entity that goes to them and that OPBA should be proud of the fact that OPBA was worthy and has the right mission in facilitating prescribed fire in OK. Stevens, who has served as “Interim Executive Director”, has been a critical leader in making this effort successful.

Weir also pointed out NRCS’ assistance in “boots on the ground” with Fritzler being assigned to help out the OPBA effort. Glasgow responded and indicated that NRCS wants to work with OPBA and other partners in leveraging tight funding into shared positions that focus their activities on prescribed fire and working with LPBAs.

Weir then gave a brief update on HB 1462. This passed the House and then narrowly in the Senate. Before being passed in the Senate, it was sent to ODAFF and when it was returned to

the senate the original language had been changed to have to get the county commissioners and local fire departments to sign off on before burning. This actually makes it more restrictive than before and several in OPBA contacted elected officials to try and get the original language version into conference. This went back to the House and was passed and is waiting signing by the Governor. Weir indicated that if LPBAs wanted to call and express their dislike for this it is now the time to do it but he cannot be a part of asking for that to be done. The other alternative is to gather additional partners – FB, AFR, Cattlemen’s, . . . etc and make a run at amending the next session. Stevens indicated that OPBA needs to be better organized and in a broader coalition communicating with various partners.

Gregory indicated that in many counties this will completely shut down prescribed fire due to the fire departments and emergency management personnel not seeing any benefit to prescribed fire and wanting to stop it all together. There is a need to get these groups on board at the state level and push from the local and state level for a better understanding of prescribed fire and support.

Scheihiny indicated a need for more education and PR in showing the difference in a prescribed fire versus a wildfire and that each has different characteristics.

Weir began an extensive review of the handout and indicated he believes OPBA has been very successful in accomplishing goals and objectives. There has been some frustration at times and set-backs but the group is still focused on removing barriers and facilitating more prescribed fire on the landscape.

Weir shifted the discussion to governance and discussed the original movement was towards hiring an executive director but funds never materialized to do that and we all pitched in and made things work. He asked if anyone felt we need to continue to try and get funding for an executive director or continue on the current leadership course. No one present spoke up in support of hiring an executive director and several commented that the way it was working should remain the course currently. Weir indicated we are far ahead of several states and other states continue to assess our progress and attempt to follow the path OPBA has blazed.

Davis indicated he does not believe we need an executive director and the way it is working with the current leadership has shown results. Davis said we need to continue to look at how to keep it going for another 10 years because many groups lose their initial leaders and the effort is diminished or vanishes. OPBA must guard against this because of the importance of prescribed fire. We need to study the “Smoky the Bear” campaign, gain momentum and continue to work on separating wildfire from prescribed fire that old Smoky mixed together in the public’s mind. Inman indicated OPBA must be diligent, continue to do PR and fight those who are against all fire.

Glasgow commented that he agreed and would recommend to OPBA that they organize a partnership meeting sometime this summer to explore some type of contribution to get more “boots on the ground” for prescribed fire. If many are pitching in then there can be a big benefit for the effort. Glasgow also brought up who can be a member and that membership can generate some revenue. Glasgow indicated the “ex officio” membership might help. The BOD agreed that diverse membership can help support the effort.

Weir then asked if any current BOD member wanted off the BOD at this point. None indicated they wanted off.

Weir indicated that several OPBA leaders have agencies that support their involvement and this has stabilized the effort. Other states do not and that has caused them to not be as successful in his view. Other state's efforts have received a tremendous amount of private and federal funding and are not as well organized and functioning at this point. Weir indicated the need to expand the BOD membership and get "new blood" into the mix to grow the leaders of the future. Davis agreed and wants to see more LPBA leadership on the BOD to guide it and take the information back to the local level.

Novotny, Pawnee PBA, indicated the need to develop a Facebook for promoting prescribed fire and they are close to having one done for them. This was agreed to be a great idea and needed.

Stevens briefly reviewed the bylaws and indicated the BOD has the flexibility to determine BOD membership and for membership in general as had been discussed earlier with Glasgow's input.

Inman made a motion that the "governance" of OPBA would continue the way it is without an executive director. Davis seconded the motion and all indicated "aye" with no one indicating "nay".

Inman made another motion concerning expanding the BOD by two members and Davis seconded and this was approved. Two nominations were presented: James "Dink" Novotny, Pawnee Co. PBA, and Chad Scheihiny, Canadian Rivers PBA (Geary). Davis had the first and Inman the second. Both were approved and both enthusiastically embraced their new leadership role.

Weir shifted the discussion to "OPBA Future Goals and Needs of the LPBAs". The following items were submitted prior to the meeting and during the ensuing discussion:

1. List what OPBA has done for you, your LPBA, and prescribed fire in OK:
 - Facilitate the effort more organized
 - Facilitated the equipping of LPBAs with trailers, radios, etc.
 - Facilitated training efforts
 - Facilitated more technical assistance....boots on the ground
 - Facilitated partnership development
 - Established OBPA as a 501c3 nonprofit and received donations to help with the overall efforts
 - Facilitated efforts to make available the affordable liability insurance
 - Developed a homepage
 - Facilitated efforts in forming the Alliance of Prescribed Burn Associations (APBA) involving NE, KS, OK, and TX
 - Facilitated the increase in awareness and public perception that prescribed fire is crucial to a healthy ecosystem

- Facilitated the availability of BOD liability insurance coverage through working with IRS to become an entity that can provide “umbrella” assistance

2. What do you expect from OPBA?

- Continuing all listed under # 1 above
- Facilitating training
- Facilitating more equipment purchases....radios, slip on spray units....spare tires for cargo trailers....
- Facilitating enough trained assistance to really help with prescribed burns
- Facilitate the quest for reasonably priced truck/vehicle insurance

Several side discussions/comments noted:

- Gregory concerning the need to report burns
- Scheihiny discussed burning some very difficult places and the need for more experienced and trained help. He asked about “paying them” and Hart indicated they run two burns at once and they need to just continue to build their local support base. Hart also said they send out an email and 8-10 people show up. Glasgow talked about group texting. Scheihiny asked about texting and an action item came out of this for Seth Coffey. **Coffey indicated there is an app for a group meeting notification that is used on university campuses. Coffey is going to develop the instructions for this and get it out and on the homepage.**
- Davis talked about other apps that will not be highlighted in these minutes.
- Davis had several comments about the expense of insurance for their vehicles
- Gregory added that QF members want to get more involved and will help if notified. Weir agreed with this comment.

3. What does OPBA need to work on in the future?

- PR and educational outreach to the county commissioners, VFDs, fire chiefs, county emergency managers, and general public.
- Facilitating additional training and support
- Facilitating equipment purchases
- Facilitate additional partnership formation with FB, AFR, Cattlemen’s....(Hart and Gregory have good contacts.)

4. What does OPBA need to work on or do different in the future?

- Facilitate cooperative relationships and partnerships at the local level between LPBAs, VFDs, co. commissioners, emergency management....Note: Novotny and Fulton comments: There are county wide fire chief meetings and need to utilize these to promote and educate on prescribed fire.
- Facilitate the development of educational packets with DVD to take to these various groups....Davis indicate a one page fact sheet would help.

- Facilitate the PR campaign from the state level and support the local level doing it locally....Gee offered one decent comment for the day and it involved getting someone who is a prescribed fire supporter from a particular group and let them sell it internally to that group. Novotny indicated that the seven “Rural Fire Coordinators” should be reached out to and brought into the mix.
- Facilitate the discussion with co. commissioners on what they can do to protect the publics’ safety in the form of firebreaks in critical areas
- Facilitate a partnership with the tribes and get them more involved. Weir indicated Hart had worked with the Iowa Tribe and Dominick had efforts underway with the Creek Nation and they are interested in getting their fire-fighting personnel involved with prescribed fire. Scheihiny indicated he had difficulty in working with the BIA because they now need two years notice before burning. Gee assisted in spelling out several words Scheihiny used so Dominick could record them properly. Gee’s assistance is appreciated.
- Facilitate a communication network with the membership of QF and NWTf because many of their members want to be trained and help out with prescribed fires
- Facilitate additional work with the media on the difference between wildfires and prescribed fires. There is a need for more radio and TV media involvement. Weir indicated the opportunity to utilize the ODWC media group and have a prescribed fire at Arcadia. This would be good to get the state elected leadership out for photo opportunities.
- Facilitate the development of LPBAs over every inch of OK.
- Facilitate the development of additional private funding sources for activities
- Facilitate increased membership in OPBA and leverage funds for staffing opportunities. Stevens brought this up and believe this is a key. Weir discussed developments in KS with Pheasants Forever staffing positions. Glasgow indicated that 60 NRCS employees are certified to write burn plans but we need more involved and can do this with partners contributing a little and add it up to get staff. Weir discussed the need for NRCS to be involved to the maximum and if NRCS needs assistance with Congressman Lucas earmarking funds or stressing the importance of their support that OPBA can push that for prescribed fire. Stevens indicated there is a need to continue to form strong coalitions concerning prescribed fire and there is “power in numbers”.
- Facilitate better legislation that supports prescribed fire and separates the facts from the fiction.
- Facilitate barrier removal when barriers arise.

ADJOURNMENT: Weir entertained a motion to adjourn. Scheihiny provided the first and Davis the second. Everyone was in agreement. The meeting ended at 3:30 pm.

NEXT MEETING: TBD

MINUTES APPROVED: 1ST _____
2ND _____

VOICE VOTE APPROVAL: YES NO

APPROVED MINUTES

SUBMITTED: _____
M. DARREL DOMINICK DATE