Why You Should Consider Prescribed Burning Throughout the Year

For most prescribed fire practitioners in the Southern Great Plains, burns are conducted during winter and early spring (December to March). This burning season has become commonplace because most of the fuels (grasses and leaf litter) are dead and burn easily, and a large portion of prescribed burns are conducted close to spring.

Burns conducted during summer and fall have different impacts on the plant community than burns conducted during winter and spring.
green-up to improve forage quality. However, historically, the land was burned during all seasons of the year. A short burn season makes it difficult to successfully accomplish land management goals. We should consider burning during the entire year to create more opportunities for land managers to conduct prescribed burns.

It is common for burns to be postponed to another year because a short burn season and weather limitations make it difficult to conduct burns in a timely manner. Postponement allows more brush encroachment on rangelands that could negatively impact wildlife habitat and grazing quantity. The seasonality of a prescribed burn depends on fuel type and the goals for the land. As for any prescribed burn, extending the burn season requires planning.

For burns conducted during summer and fall, grasslands and mixed shrublands burn better than woodlands. To carry a fire through wooded areas during the growing season than in December or January.

Burns conducted during summer and fall have different impacts on the plant community than burns conducted during winter and spring. Burns during the growing season typically have a bigger impact on brush species. If brush control is a land management objective, consider burning during the growing season. It also is beneficial to wildlife to have burned areas at different times of the year to increase plant diversity, which is imperative for good wildlife habitat. Burning multiple times of the year creates a mosaic of various plant communities in different plant successional stages to benefit many wildlife species.

Typically, weather conditions are most volatile during winter and early spring in the Southern Great Plains. Days with low humidity and high winds are not uncommon. In summer and fall, weather conditions tend to be more stable with lower wind speeds and higher humidity. Due to more consistent and safer weather conditions during summer and fall, some people prefer to burn outside the typical burn season. Burns during the growing season also tend to have fewer escapes than burns in the dormant season because green vegetation mixed with dead fuel slows down the fire.

Prescribed fire is an important ecological process for the Southern Great Plains. Our plants are adapted to and require fire, regardless of the burn season. We should consider using fire at all times of the year to accomplish our land management goals. The Noble Foundation typically offers a dormant season prescribed burn field day and a growing season prescribed burn field day to help fire practitioners learn how to use fire in different seasons. We shouldn’t limit ourselves to just a few months out of the year to burn.

**UPCOMING EVENT**

**DORMANT SEASON PRESCRIBED BURN FIELD DAY**

8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
Jan. 19, 2017

Noble Foundation Oswalt Road Ranch
18414 Dixon Rd.
Marietta, OK 73448

Registration Fee: $20, includes lunch

**POWER EQUIPMENT**

- Sprayers
- Water pump
- Chainsaw
- Blower

**HAND EQUIPMENT**

- Drip torch
- Drip torch fuel
- Ax
- Fire rake
- Fire swatter
- Shovel
- Wire-cutting pliers