

JANUARY 2022

THE SISKIYOU FIRE SPARK



Sparks in the Snow

QUARTZ VALLEY INDIAN RESERVATION

As the first snowstorm in December dusted the mountains of Siskiyou County, the culmination of a year of dedicated hard work on the part of Sean Ryan, Crystal Robinson, Isaiha Williams, Necho Barnes, and Dave Caulder, made history. This was the first agency-led burn on Quartz Valley Indian Reservation (QVIR) lands, but it also set the stage for future prescribed burn implementation on the Reservation. With the interagency collaboration of QVIR, the BIA, the US Forest Service, CalFIRE, Shasta Valley Resource Conservation District, and Scott River Watershed Council, this small group of inter-agency fire lighters tromped into the snow behind a neighborhood on the QVIR in Scott Valley. The 65 acres of piles that had been built and rebuilt by the meticulous QVIR fuels crew,



Isaiha Williams lighting a pile with a propane torch

were covered with snow and it took some dedicated work with propane torches to get the piles lit. Soon enough, however, the piles were ablaze and as the propane torches moved onward to light other piles, others stayed back to chunk in the remaining unburnt fuels. Though sometimes tedious work, burning these piles reduces fuel-loading in the forests, increases defensible space, and provides considerable benefit to this community in case of a wildfire. With the skill and teamwork that occurred during this burn, it had the appearance of an everyday occurrence, building the lasting sparks of collaborations.

Special thanks to Tribal Chairman Harold Bennett, the Quartz Valley Community, BIA Burn Boss Greg Perry, BIA Burn Boss Trainee Monte Kawahara, and Scot Steinbring

SPBA Mission:

The Siskiyou Prescribed Burn Association (SPBA) includes landowners, tribes, and local organizations and agencies that work together to safely conduct burns in the interest of restoring historic roles of fire, using fire as a management tool, and reducing wildfire hazard to our communities and watersheds throughout the diverse fire-adapted landscapes of Siskiyou County.

<https://calpba.org/siskiyou-pba>

Like us on Facebook at Siskiyou Prescribed Burn Association



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

MARGARET MEAD

Siskiyou PBA T-SHIRTS!

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Siskiyou PBA t-shirts!

100% cotton so they are perfect for wearing
on a prescribed burn!

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SISKIYOU PBA
PRESCRIBED BURN
ASSOCIATION



Basic Wildland Fire-lighter Training

COLLEGE OF THE SISKIYOU - WEED

The SPBA is hosting, for the first time, a National Wildland Coordinating Group (NWC) basic fire training (S-130/S-190) in February. This course introduces basic fire concepts and practices to 25 participants from Northern California and will specifically focus on prescribed burn operations. The PBA aims to promote fire knowledge in the community through a grassroots prescribed burn model. This training will help build local capacity in the community to cultivate more fire adapted ecosystems and communities.



Torchbearr

SCOT STEINBRING AND ERICA TERENCE

Public interest in getting good fire on the ground is growing. But prescribed fire training and capacity to burn lag behind, sometimes limiting what we can accomplish.

A non-profit organization called Torchbearr (yes, with a double r) formed in 2021 to help close this capacity gap and empower people to burn together more. The new group aims to make a brighter fire future for all. To do that, the organization will create a mobile training center, build partnerships, and seek opportunities to burn at small and large scales with partners. Torchbearr also intends to develop a workforce that can advance work to reintroduce fire on our landscapes on a meaningful scale. And, Torchbearr plans to develop and maintain a clearinghouse of prescribed fire training, experience, and qualifications that will issue, hold, and deactivate purple cards for prescribed burn practitioners specifically.

While Torchbearr is in the final stages of forming its organization, with 501 (c)3 tax exempt recognition from the IRS pending, the group is launching some early initiatives in collaboration with the Siskiyou Prescribed Burn Association, Scott River Watershed Council and the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation. Torchbearr Operations Director Scot Steinbring has announced a 2022 training schedule which can be found on Torchbearr's website: www.torchbearr.org

If we're going to undo the damage one hundred years of fire suppression has done, we'll need accessible training and students of fire from many backgrounds – not just fire agencies - stepping up and leveling up. Whether you need basic fire school, a fire safety refresher, a work capacity test, or a more specialized session in operating equipment like pumps, hoses and fire engines, here's a chance to develop your fire awareness and skills and get involved in the movement to bring prescribed fire back to our land. Be a torchbearr, not a torch barrier! Let's manage fire with fire instead of fear!



Good Fire in the Klamath

WILL HARLING-MKWC

In 2021, the Mid Klamath Watershed Council (MKWC), Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources, Klamath and Six Rivers National Forests, and other Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX) partners ramped up prescribed burning on public, tribal and private lands. Beginning in January and continuing through December, a concerted effort to take advantage of ideal burn windows for pile burning as well as broadcast burning yielded significant results. Over 800 acres of piles and 200 acres of broadcast burning were accomplished through the TREX program, and related All Hands All Lands (AHAL) program. The TREX program utilizes a national agreement between the Nature Conservancy and the US Forest Service to engage academic, local, tribal, state, federal and international partners burning across all ownerships. The All Hands All Lands program utilizes this TREX agreement, but takes it one step further by creating agreements between local partners to utilize regional fire resources on quick timelines to make the most of short burn windows.

The one hitch to the TREX program, and the reason why Prescribed Burn Associations are so important, is that all participants are required to meet minimum National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) firefighter qualifications. This requires a series of basic firefighting classes (S-130, S190, etc) and annual refresher courses (RT-130) to secure and maintain qualifications. There was great synergy between the Siskiyou PBA sponsored burns across the county in 2021, and the NWCG resources provided by the Karuk Tribe and MKWC, who brought engines, supplies (hose and hardware), and experienced firefighters to provide training and leadership at these PBA burns.

In March 2021, a local landowner in Happy Camp, CA worked with the Happy Camp Volunteer Fire Department, MKWC, the Karuk Tribe and others, to implement a landowner-led broadcast burn to reduce heavy fuel loading directly below his house. This burn utilized the 2020 Slater Fire wildfire footprint as the upslope unit boundary, reducing the risk of escape. Unfortunately, this type of burning is rare due to challenges with liability, insurance availability, environmental compliance, and permitting.

While there are still many hurdles ahead, it is clear momentum for implementing prescribed fire is growing in Siskiyou County and across the state and the western U.S. A passionate and skilled group of community leaders is coming together to bring fire back in a good way, working with landowners and permitting agencies to work within this challenging system to make it happen. There is room in this Good Fire movement for everyone in Siskiyou County who has worked with proactive fire, or is interested in learning, to engage in this work and help us do even more in 2022. Whether it's a TREX or AHAL or a PBA burn, come burn with us!

Every person can make a difference!



Photo credit to KTREX and MKWC