

SOCIAL AND REGULATORY BARRIERS TO THE USE OF PRESCRIBED FIRE BY PRIVATE LAND MANAGERS IN THE SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS

A Survey of County Commissioners in Texas and Oklahoma



Study Conducted by



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In Collaboration with

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Section 1: Involvement with prescribed fire

1. How familiar would you say you are with prescribed fire?

Very familiar
Moderately familiar
Slightly familiar
Not at all familiar

2. During your career as a commissioner, what portion of your time have you spent on issues relating to prescribed fire, burn bans, or wildfires? Please check only one box.

0% 1-25% 26-50% more than 50%

3. Have you ever been asked to participate or have you ever participated in a prescribed burn?

Yes No

If No, please go to question 6 on the next page, otherwise continue to question 4.

4. In what capacity were you invited to participate or did you actually participate?
Please check all that apply.

Bystander Volunteer Assistant Burn Manager Other

If other, please specify how: _____

5. Which of the following agencies or organizations have asked you to participate or have had you participate in a prescribed burn? Please check all that apply.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Texas Parks & Wildlife
Texas Forest Service Oklahoma Forestry Services
Prescribed Burn Association Private landowners

Other. Please specify which one(s): _____

Section 2: Perspectives and awareness of issues pertaining to prescribed fire

6. In the table below, please check the opinion that best fits your opinion about each statement. Please check only one box per statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A. The use of prescribed fire is considered a safe and beneficial method of land management and should be practiced more frequently.					
B. The use of prescribed fire is an unsafe practice that should be more heavily regulated and only sparingly allowed to be conducted.					

7. Are you aware of the liability standard your state currently enforces for the use of prescribed fire? Yes No

If yes, please provide a brief description of the liability standard.

8. From where do you obtain information regarding prescribed fire or, if you are not familiar with this information, where would you most likely go to obtain answers?

USDA Forest Service

State Forest Service

Local fire chief/fire department/emergency management coordinators

Colleagues/fellow County Commissioners

Other, please specify: _____

Supplementary Document 1: A copy of the survey mailed to 400 county commissioners in Texas and Oklahoma, USA

9. Have you ever placed a burn ban in your county? Yes No

If yes, please provide a brief description of the conditions under which the burn ban(s) was (were) placed and the length of the ban.

10. To the best of your knowledge, what are the criteria that must be met for placing a burn ban? Please check all that apply.

Persistent high wind conditions (greater than 20 mph)
Persistent dry conditions (relative humidity below 20%)
Persistent hot conditions (air temperatures are greater than 95 deg Fahrenheit)
Abnormally high fuel loads
The Keetch-Byram Drought Index exceeds 400
Red Flag designation from the USDA Forest Service
State of emergency being declared for the county or state
No criteria must be met. A burn ban can be placed at discretion of County Commissioners.

Other. Please specify: _____

11. What information sources do you use to determine the basis for implementing a burn ban in your County? Please check all that apply.

Local weather reports
Burn bans of neighboring counties
Local fire chiefs recommendations
State agency drought index
Red Flag designations from the USDA Forest Service
Fire danger ratings from state agencies
USDA Forest Service
State Forest Service
Local fire chief/fire department
Colleagues/fellow county commissioners

Other. Please specify: _____

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12. Are you aware of any exceptions for burning during a burn ban and what those exceptions entail? Yes No

If yes, please explain briefly:

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Please read the following definitions regarding liability standards for applying prescribed fire before answering the next question.

The liability standard for prescribed fire can be either Simple or Gross negligence. Simple negligence standards require the burner to practice reasonable care in applying a prescribed burn; they require the plaintiff to show negligence by the defendant in order for the burner to be liable for damage caused by escaped wildfire. Gross negligence liability standards provide that, if a burner follows a set of codified regulations regarding burning, a plaintiff must show reckless disregard of the duty of care owed others by the burner.

13. Considering the previous definitions, do you think a shift in the legislation from simple negligence (failure to use ordinary care) to gross negligence (conscious and voluntary disregard of the need to use reasonable care) would change the frequency with which you enact burn bans? Yes No

If yes, would you enact more or fewer burn bans? More Fewer

Please briefly explain your response:

14. Considering the previous definitions, do you think that a shift in the legislation from simple negligence to gross negligence would result in a change in pressure from the public to enact more burn bans? Yes No

If yes, do you think the public would demand more or fewer burn bans?

More Fewer

Please briefly explain your response:

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Section 3: Demographic information

15. How many years have you served as a County Commissioner? _____(Years)

16. Please briefly tell us about your line of work before you became a County Commissioner?

17. Do you own any rural land? Yes No

18. If yes, have you removed any brush control on your property Yes No

19. If yes, which of the following treatments have you used to control brush in your land?
Mechanical Chemical Goat browsing Prescribed fire

20. Please describe the primary reason for either applying or not applying prescribed fire on your land.

21. In what year were you born? _____

22. What is your gender? Male Female

23. What is your ethnicity? _____

24. How many years of formal education did you receive (including school, technical training and college)? _____(Years)