

ME RxBC 11-30-21 Meeting Notes

Monday, November 29, 2021

10:41 AM

1000-1200 ET

Attendees

- Aliesha Black, MFS
- John Neely, USFS WMNF
- Amanda Mahaffey, FSG
- Jon Janelle, USFS MEF
- Tim Bickford, ME ARNG
- Madeleine Landrum, UMO Ph. D.
- Eric Earle, NFFPC
- John Leavitt, Burning Alternatives
- Daniel Hill, MDIFW
- Jon Bailey, TNC-ME

Roll call/welcome

- Program updates/round-robin
 - John Leavitt: Made contact with MassWildlife, able to get down there and help on 3 burns this fall. Impressive what they've done; have their own wildlife folks doing interesting RxB. Self-contained which is neat. 53 ac in one day just east of Quabbin. 2 days burning blueberry barren on 1200' peak in VT border. Nice solid program going. Fun to volunteer with them. Last burn on Quabbin, burned with Ken Canfield. They put a lot of fire on the ground.
 - John Neely: Since last meeting, we haven't been able to get over into ME. This summer, most of our staff out West on fires. Did help NH F&G with some Karner blue butterfly habitat burning in September. Helped Town of Campton with a cooperative burn on private property. Were going to help Chatham FD on a burn, but canceled due to weather. We have a lot of ac planned for springtime.
 - Aliesha Black: We burned with Margaret from LT in Brunswick, Crystal Spring Farm, blueberry areas that John Leavitt had burned years ago. Winds were a little squirrely. Cool firewhorl. Everybody was safe. Some other burns done on state property throughout the southern section of state. Some bigger burns planned up north got canceled. Fall burns didn't get to go off.
 - Daniel Hill: Met at Kennebunk Plains WMA, worked on NA Fire Learning Trail. 100-ac timber harvest on Frye Mountain with deer goals and summer scarification for oak-pine habitat. MNAP, Jared resource mgr. Pitch pine-scrub oak strips south of Brownfield airport. Discussed fire ecology from MNAP's side, recruitment. Good discussions and planning.
 - Tim: Unable to get fire on the ground this summer, but ready for 2022. Got on a couple other fires.
 - Eric Earle: FSWT still having discussion. Very interested in promoting it within regular states and agencies. Not a lot of discussion lately at Ops level. Some discussion from FSWT.
 - Aliesha: We sent out a survey asking what some of the problems, hangups for you as an agency, how much do you burn, what you burn for. Thinking about how to coordinate at a Compact. We can share resources without an issue. Part of an agreement even with RxB. Haven't figured out a focus from here on out yet. Meeting in January,
 - Amanda: MPBN story

- Madeleine: Reconstructing Maine's forest fire history and human paleoecology. Red pine stand reconstruction using dendrochronology. Cultural fire use. I'm starting into charcoal analysis. Starting study of ponds. See how human presence and population size affected forest structure and plants used for food sources. Starting to find some really interesting charcoal records that don't agree with the more widely accepted history of fire in Maine forests. People were interacting with the landscape. Just in prelim stage. NRS will be publishing probably next spring or summer, some great records. Ton of unpublished work in ME special records Also partnering with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers from four tribes in ME.
- Jon Janelle: MEF starting fire program, RxB, mech removals, build a reserve program. CWPP first step.
- Jon B.: 3 different burn units this year. Small successes surrounded by large successes. Implementing TNC's layers of COVID protocols and safety. Fact we were able to safely implement burns, able to gain that trust. Excitement of being able to get burns on ground. Mid-October, COVID metric was ICU % use. If it's above 90% in our region for our hospitals, it's a clear no-go. From August through mid-October, we were over that threshold. As soon as we got that green light, we were able to get fire on the ground safely. 3 different burn units in sandplain-grassland site. Learned a lot. Knowing COVID policies would be a challenge, decided to try anyway with RH of 82. It burned because we had light and flashy fuel. Same fuel, light cloud cover, met ecological objectives, got people out together learning and burning. Sets us up well for next spring collaborative burning. Will really look at spring burns.
- Additional items

Updates

- MOU finalized draft ready to send out
 - Draft out, add contact info
 - John N.: USFS can run it through, but if another federal agency can run with it, that could smooth the process.
- Update on training successes, burning from this field season
 - o Engine Ops Training
 - Tim: Wildland fire engine operator training course in Gilead, ME. Really good turnout considering COVID and wildfire season. First week of August. Had folks from MFS, TNC, NH Guard, Mass Guard, VT Guard, MassWildlife, IF&W, FSG. 3 days on site. Drills with engines. Moving water, setting up scenarios. Went well. I learned a lot not only with our engines, but also with helping set it up and from an operational standpoint, logistics on getting the training going.
 - Aliesha: 290 for forest rangers. Fire weather class. Long, but we were able to use the Weather Service folks. They taught a couple of the tougher sections. Interest in having that through the Council.
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 - Jon B.: Completed S130/190 training. Also, MPBN attended to capture a story on climate change. Correlated with a burn day. Susan Sharon super-excited to be here. All the crew. I'll share the link with everybody. Really good example of getting good education and word out about good fire in ME. PIO trainees for TREX. Invite people to e
 - o Fall Burns
- CWPP

- Jon Janelle: FSG proposal to fund CWPP for greater Massabesic area. None of the funds can be used on the Massabesic Forest itself. Big part is training. Got Big Water. Starting to do more S courses. 130/190, 211, 212, 215. Offered in some format over next 3 years. Potentially doing an academy-based program so we can offer more than one class over a 3-day period. CWPP also provides some PPE and opportunities for municipal folks to participate in TREX. And build on relationships.
- John N.: Last week, went out with someone from WO, good discussion, excitement about opportunities there. E.g. Whites, questions about fire effects in stand types. How to effectively combine RxB for fuels reduction with silvicultural goals and objectives. Massabesic can help with that. Developing sources for some of these lower-grade wood products. Maybe biochar. One plant working on getting online in northern ME. Not a lot of other opportunities. Company in MA. One of the main issues we hear as far as pulp product goes, when we're burning in managed timberlands, issue with selling lower-grade products with char. IF we can find a way to get some of this wood out, that would help greatly with fuels reduction and RxB in the timberlands. Something Massabesic can do. Going to be a great future laboratory for NE fuels and fires, building resiliency for future.
- ME-TREX updates 2022
 - o Burn unit requests
 - John Neely: We'll have units. Most in NH. Could line stuff up for ME as well. Bulk in NH. Different fuel types. I'd be curious about IMT. Foss-Melton? Cooperative burn. 100 ac blueberry barren. Eaton. Next to Porter.
 - Units in red pine, pitch pine habitat, WUI. About 200 ac we want complete in there in Conway, about 15 minutes from Eaton, 20 minutes from Fryeburg. Will try to get some of those this spring, but I doubt we'll be able to get all of them.
 - Some stuff along the Kancamagus, though tricky in fall; usually spring burns. Grassland/shrubland.
 - We should reach out to Chris.
 - Jon J.: 2 at Massabesic. Going to be openings Tarwater Pond area. Blueberries, some shrubs. 8 ac total in 2 units, right next to each other. Some prep needed.
 - Tim: We'll have 4 units, around 180 ac on Hollis, most already prepped.
 - Jon B. I have at least a dozen between Wells, Kplains, Fryeburg, Waterboro, maybe a land trust. 40-100 ac. From grassland to pine barrens, to oak woodlands, more than half prepped. Having a running list of all units, as conditions become available, maybe having 2 modules simultaneously.
 - Daniel: Brownfield, 30 ac. Scarborough. Kplains. Will get together with Scott Lindsay to see about conditions.
 - o IMT zoom calls
 - Jon Bailey: Idea with IMT is to pull not a team, but still provide opportunities. Exchange, diversity. Provide opportunities to grow and form a unique team. Not come already as a team, but build cohesion based on team, diversity and inclusion. Pros and cons of bringing in teams. They've gone through the forming-storming-norming-performing functions. We want to bring in partners from other places. Diversity of folks, experiences, grow together.
 - Aliesha: IMT shared with us how they created the whole program. About being able to take people from different places and gain from each other.
 - Jon B: NWCG standards can be run as you see fit on org chart. WA TREX I led, only 25 participants, similar to what we're looking at IMT was only 5-6 folks. Multiple people had multiple tasks. Ashland TREX ran as a true Type 3 incident with a little bit of give to provide

opportunities. Logistics, planning, training, safety. Up to us. We want to fill out and have a safe IMT for the size TRES we're operating.

- John N.: I would suggest that we try a semi-formal team. It sounds like you're going to need most of the positions filled. It is a good opportunity to get people experience on working on a Type 3 team, above and beyond the TRES itself. Incident mgmt is good for folks. They'll be looking out for all the logistics, finance, etc. sections. ME has great teams. At the very least, could have experienced people training with trainees in a Type 3 team. I would say, don't neglect the opportunity for a training scenario for team members.
- Jon B.: Is different, learning growing experience.
- TRES model intent is to be different than a federal detail. A lot of collaborative approach, looking at science and research, tours on rainy days. Camaraderie, reps from all partners doing overviews of landscapes, maybe diving into special research. Unique and different opportunity. Different training opportunities. Different type than typical opportunities.
- Aliesha: This group is a great place to start. Anything you'd like to share outside of just putting fire on the ground.

New Business

- Elections heads-up to all - Nominations are open
 - Jon B. will set up doodle poll for week of Jan. 10.
- Future training for winter/spring
 - Eric: Compact offering 0305, Type 3 IMT training. Feb. 28 5-day training. Open to Compact members. Can accommodate 50 students. Will then open to other agencies. Would really like to have 5 teams of 10. May tie into IMT. Info on our website.
 - Aliesha: MFS will do RT-130. do we have any needs identified for folks? Anything holding them back from their burning season? Maybe coordinate for winter.
 - Jon B.: As you step up from basic courses, just knowing that opportunities are out there. Pumps, etc. We're also doing an RT-130. Typically 1st week of April. Not sure if hybrid or Zoom. April 6. Also new cohort of 130/190 students, hybrid. Starting in February with Zooms, eventually a field day come spring. Will work with Jon J. on collaborating on field days. Site and training opportunities.
 - John N.: We will plan to have RT-130 and pack test, 1 in May, 1 in June. Typically do pack tests April, May, and June, a couple more to catch seasonals. Anybody welcome for work capacity test; you just need an administrator. We work with State of NH to put on an academy. Typically in June-July. Haven't figured out what classes to do this time. Last time did 130/190, pumps, chainsaw, L280. Add other classes next year. I plan to continue to put on 130/190 class. New format in 130/190. We try to hold those in person. Hope COVID won't be as big an issue. Set stage for success for these folks. I can share that info once we get it together. In NH, somewhat of a bottleneck for burn plan prep, RxB-specific classes folks are wanting to take. Could be a ME-NH Council joint effort. Would be great if we combined our efforts. And if NH is made aware of this upcoming TRES and given opportunities to help out.
 - Aliesha: We'll have other classes, e.g. pumps in southern region. Saw class maybe down south.
 - Amanda: Training opps on website?
 - Jon B.: Website is public-facing. Have info on TRES, by-laws, educational, opportunities. We can add trainings as we see fit on there. Can also do an email every couple months if you want. Or a listserve.
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- Collaborated burning
- An outlook of spring burns

- Tim: 40 ac unit in Hollis.
- Jon B.: 12 units, anything we don't burn would be for TREX in fall. Get caught up on grasslands. Support Tim at Hollis. Potentially Fryeburg, though I'd like to leave for fall. Airport. IF&W as well. Maybe pine barrens in Waterboro. Oak woodland sloping down into Pine Barren unit. Might be more growing season. Plenty to roast.
- John N.: USFS 200+ ac mixed pine-oak in WUI in Conway. We'll get as much of that done in spring as we can, but will certainly be units for TREX.
- Typical contingent wildlife grassland shrubland units. 10 scattered over Forest we'll try to get
- Some oak silvicultural burns I'd like to get to in the spring or save for TREX.
- We get a lot of landowners that desire to have their property burned. If they're close to USFS, we can work up a quick agreement to burn for them. We are also eventually looking to get some cross-boundary projects going. Good future projects.
- Aliesha: In this area, we have 1 with Brunswick postponed, Augusta piece with Parks & Lands, P&L in Rome. Some fields on rotation in Bradbury Mtn area. Eric Ahlquist out for the year on a Guard assignment in TX. Hopefully someone else will step up. Trying to work with some of the larger landowners up north to do slash pile burns.
- Daniel: Jon touched on our southern properties. DO have annual spring burn at Swan Island WMA, burn around 30 ac. I'm sure a unit scheduled for this spring. Mechanical harvest at Frye Mtn, couple hundred ac. For grouse, Am Woodcock.
- Winter Mechanical treatments
 - Jon B. SPB located in ME and NH and NY. I believe they're still working on PR for the state, collaborative approach from state forestry agencies. Talking with our friends at APB. Only about 25 specimens in trap at Waterboro. Late season traps. Wonder if late fledged with fall warming. All of us had been proactive collaborating with colleagues from south. Specialists are not freaking out with the numbers. If hundreds in trap, would be freaking out. Looking at ramping up mechanical treatments, though strongly correlates with chip markets being in the dumps. Would like to treat trap area, whether control or mgmt. Thinning around perimeter. Also working with MFS, help fund additional funnel traps. 4,000-ac tract of land. Not sure if they found it in Hollis, though at least there it's pitch pine savanna. Waterboro doghair thickets unfortunately good SPB ground. Lucky we've done burning and thinning in recent years, though a lot more work to do. Timber market challenges. Tough, looking at grants.
- Compact meeting
 - Eric: Jan. 26-27. hybrid, but hoping most folks will be in person. At Merry Manor in So Po. If you haven't received a copy of the agenda, let me know. Also on our website. Agenda includes the training coordinator from Tall Timbers. Zack Prusak. Registration form. No cost for attending virtually.
 - Jon: Zack is great; he's a TNC alum. He's provided training opportunities to go down to FL. Very exciting to have him as a resource for us moving ahead.
 - Float idea of Council exchange.
- Celebrate Nancy Sferra
 - Nancy Sferra is retiring after 25 years as a fire manager and TNC employee. Nancy's position will be filled. tnc.org/jobs. Land Management/science position for state. Will be filled. We want more staff, more \$. Will get more funding, more staffing in future. Nancy will still be a volunteer with us.
- Schedule January meeting
 - Week of Jan. 10

- Invite NH RxB Council
- Focus discussion on barriers to RxB. Start with FSWT survey results.
- Getting foresters, consultants comfortable with RxB.
- NH want to do survey like PA's on public use of RxB