

Maine RxBC meeting

January 11, 2023, 0900-1100

Attendees: Jon Bailey, John Leavitt, Tim Bickford, George Harris, Aliesha Black, John Neely, Ken Spacht, Will Barnum, Karl Stromayer, Sean Campbell, Amanda Mahaffey, Dan Hill, Justin Carney, Erik Ahlquist, Matthew Rourke, Katie Glover

Agenda for the January 11 Council meeting:

- January Council meeting agenda
 - No business meeting is needed (no issues requiring voting)
 - Agency/Org updates (round robin)
 - MOU
 - Set priorities for 2023
 - Shared training opportunities - gauge needs locally and regionally
- S130/190, S131
- RT130
- Pumps, engines, saws, other?
- New shared burning opportunities
 - Units on tap for 2023
 - Crystal Bog
- Shared outreach opportunities
 - Web page with info for private landowners interested in burning
 - Explore ideas for learning & burn? Invite Jenny Case to talk about PA's learn & burn
- Future of TREC in the Northeast
- Other?
 - Future awards for advancing RxB in ME

Notes:

Round robin updates

- TNC
 - Rachel Carson partnership
 - 3-tiered grant application
 - Habitat restoration via prescribed fire
 - Community protection
 - Seasonal staffing at TNC
 - Full time with benefits, shared with Georgia TNC
 - Sam Nye (worked for TNC for 2 seasons)

- ME ARNG
 - o DOD is now in NWCG
 - Now, getting all states up to NWCG standards
 - Maine already follows NWCG standards
 - Huge challenge, writing training plans for multiple folks
 - o All Hollis units are due for fire
 - 1 priority spring fire
- MFS
 - o Developing ideas to help with BPL and IFW
 - Modeling after other states
 - o Some BPL sites ready for fire this year
- Forest Stewards Guild
 - o Massabesic CWPP
- Climate Change Institute
 - o Interest to get more involved in active management
 - o Grant funding being sourced to develop partnerships
- USFWS
 - o Preparing units for spring burns
 - o Increasing capacity for prescribed burn at the refuge
 - o 2 most senior fire positions are currently vacant (for implementation in 5 states)
 - o Timber point burn collaboration
- MDIF&W
 - o Bill proposal, funding opportunities for good work
 - o Good fire at Kennebunk with TREX
 - o Scarborough Marsh burn units prepped- potential spring burn
 - o Establish more IFW staff involved in fire training
- USFS
 - o Burn pause, many projects delayed
 - o New standards being implemented
 - o Busy season ahead, rolled over units from previous season
 - o Multiple sites in NH and ME
 - o Interest in MOU

MOU

- Background
 - o NH prescribed fire council shared their MOU
 - o decided to create Maine RxBC MOU in order to create ability to successfully collaborate with partners
 - cooperative burning and the legalities of it

- Crowd sourced interest
- Began planning TREX.... but then the pandemic hit
- TREX 2022 was a success
- Hope to continue partner collaborations
- Revisions needed?
 - Several organizations and agencies already have MOUs together
 - Should we establish a MOU with all attendees for stronger collaborations?
 - USFS
 - MOU is not meant to exchange anything of value, meant to be a vague agreement to work together on different things (not a lot of teeth)
 - What could work: MOU that says all parties that are identified in this agreement, agree to work together to promote prescribed fire
 - Specific agreements under umbrella between orgs/agencies listed below
 - Working to get language for partnership MOU with Master collab plan between WMNF and state of Maine
 - Doing a supplemental project to show collaboration
 - Stafford Act Agreement
 - Potential way to establish agreement with partners in this meeting
 - Would need specific agreement with any org not associated with state or federal govts
 - Separate clarifying agreements
 - Easily create a MOU establishing partnership, but need a little more specifications for each chapter to promote effective collaboration
 - Grants folks need specific language to prevent committing items of value- includes time spent
 - Instead establish common goals
 - Formalize group saying we will work to promote overarching goal, independently
 - In order for USFS to participate with the bylaws, USFS needs more specific agreements
 - Willing to continue finding a path to make this work, flexible on whether to create separate USFS agreements from overarching Maine RxBC MOU
 - Would vague MOU allow USFS to burn and collaborate?
 - It would be a start, can be used as an umbrella to lead to bigger and better things, plans and common goals
 - "A memorandum of understanding is an agreement between two or more parties outlined in a formal document. It is not legally binding but signals the willingness of the parties to move forward with a contract.

- “The MOU can be seen as the starting point for negotiations as it defines the scope and purpose of the talks. Such memoranda are most often seen in international treaty negotiations but also may be used in high-stakes business dealings such as merger talks.”
- USFWS
 - MOU would be effective for collaboration and commitments
- TNC
 - Fire is classified as a high-risk activity- so, need some meat to MOU
 - What is the most watered-down agreement possible on legalities basis? Need to consult
 - Liabilities of group need to be assessed
 - What happens if something goes wrong
- ME ARNG
 - A bit unpredictable, no solid knowledge of leadership response
 - A general can sign a MOU
- Future small group meeting and MOU development
 - Create a more rigorous agreement for participating entities

Shared priorities for 2023

- 2023 Council Goals
 - MOU
 - More collaborative burning
 - Training up folks in partner orgs and agencies
 - Figure out what the council can support
 - Establishing a good communication channel for meetings, events, etc.
 - Potentially a MailChimp database for Council
 - Establish regular times for meetings
 - Webpage info for private landowners about RxB in ME

Shared Training Opportunities

- 130/190s
- Partners in need of engines, pumps, etc.?
- Camp Edwards (Cape Cod) Academy – last week of June
 - 131-90, pumps, 230, 231, crew boss, engine boss
 - May be a couple 300 level courses if instructors found
 - Open to National Guard first, then partners
 - Potentially a week-long program with overlapping classes, tbd
- S130/190
 - TNC
 - 130/190 for 60 folks
 - Hybrid

- MFS
 - 130/190 Hybrid version in the works in York County
- Engines/pumps
 - TNC staff interests in engines/pumps
 - MFS hope to have engines/pumps training as well
- RT130
 - WMNF early April – open to partners, but contractors are a different game
 - Pack tests – would need agency administrator to participate
 - TNC end of March, early April
 - MFS – South, Central, North

Shared burning opportunities

- TNC
 - Fryeburg Airport
 - Crystal Bog -
 - Bog Fen with unique orchid
 - Bare open ground on surface
- MFS
 - landowner requests for small burns are common
- USFWS
 - Some units ready for burn
- MDIF&W
 - Some units ready for burn this season
 - More coming next meeting
- NH RxB Council
 - Private landowners are often reaching out as well
 - Program to help landowners burn through contractors, wildlife management focus- in NH
- Ken Spacht-
 - Resources to share
 - Certified trainers
 - Equipment
 - Happy to chat

Shared outreach opportunities

- Council inquiries
 - Private landowners are frequently reaching out
 - Directing towards MFS and local fire chief

- Hope to develop more formal approach
 - Potentially add to a website info on private land burning
 - History, professional connections, FAQs, etc.
 - Would be great to develop in 2023
- NRCS monies to write burn plans for landowners
 - In NH
 - difficult, cut and dry
 - Burn windows are difficult to navigate
 - Develop personal relationships with long-term collaboration in NRCS to create better monies usage
- Learn and Burns
 - Needs to be hosted by agency, not council
 - Hope to proceed with conversation after consulting with lawyers
 - PA held learn and burn- potential to learn from PA TNC folks on how to create learn and burn in Northeast

Future of TREX in the Northeast

- Successfully held a TREX event in 2022
 - Held at Maine Teen Camp
 - Rainy weather with indoor presentations
 - Media, many news stories
 - Able to burn at Wells Barrens and Kennebunk Plains
 - Best available fuels
 - IA training - Black lining, Lighting spot fires
 - Solid fire breaks, triple needed crew resources, still burn safely
 - Compact and TNC invested a lot of money with a lot of in-kind funds from other orgs/agencies
 - First TREX in northeast
 - Highlights
 - Able to learn from everyone getting together
 - Aliasha finished her Burn Boss on the assignment
 - Tim's first TREXs- a huge learning experience
 - Remarkable logistics for 35 people
 - Many moving pieces with 6 days of burning
 - 12-13 orgs and agencies represented from US and Canada
 - Having diversity of fuels available made it successful to cover acreage
 - Successfully dodged 2 hurricanes
 - Supportive neighbors at burn units and supportive partners
 - Chilly temps surprised southern attendees- giant stone fireplace kept folks warm
 - extracurricular activities made it more valuable

- Any connections with Canadian partners?
 - o One participant from Canada, needed to leave early due to hurricane
 - o Open door for collaboration
 - o Continued conversation at Compact meeting
- PIO work to get word out
 - o Start small, but have someone designated as information officer could be helpful
- Future TRES events possible but limited by available fuels
 - o Mass has a lot of islands for burning
 - o PA potential interest
 - o A lot of the hard work is already done, things saved from 2022

NH Burn Council meeting (Collaboration)

- Joint meeting?
- Coordinate with John Neely
- Meeting on Feb 1st meeting 9am-12pm
 - o Agenda tbd
- NH RxB Council meeting:
 - o <https://unh.zoom.us/j/96415751507>
 - o Agenda
 - Review and Approval of August and October 2022 Meeting Minutes
 - Ken Spacht – Wolf Rock Wildland Fire Suppression Introduction
 - Peter Breigenzer: JFSP GRIN research proposal
 - Steve Najjar – Communications/Dedicated Frequency
 - Rebecca DiGirolomo – Prescribed fire priorities dashboard demonstration
 - Updates From Sub-Committees
 - Round Table: Agency Rx Burn Season Plans, Training Opportunities, Projects and Resource Needs
 - Select Next Meeting Date/ Location

Future awards through the Council

- Might not be there yet, but something to think about
 - o Potential public education opportunities and media sharing

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