

# Burn associations beneficial to property owners

STILLWATER, Okla. – Burn associations have been spreading like wildfire since the idea came to fruition at Oklahoma State University’s Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

The associations have been around the state for more than five years. Currently, there are 12 associations in Oklahoma that cover 25 counties, totaling more than 300 members.

“In the last two years, six of the most active associations have conducted 125 burns on more than 56,000 acres, done the right way and done safely,” said John Weir, research associate with OSU’s department of rangeland ecology and management.

The central idea of the associations is for landowners to pool their equipment and help each other burn safely.

“In areas where you have small ownerships, where the pastures aren’t as big or you have fragmented ownership, people want to burn; however, they have concerns about burning and not being able to do it,” Weir said. “(Burn associations) provide added equipment and labor to make the burns safer. One of the biggest benefits that members will see is a reduction in liability.”

Some landowners may be a bit apprehensive to burn because of lack of experience or the threat of a fire moving to a neighbor’s land. By joining a burn association, these landowners can manage risks by working with more experienced individuals.

“If the fire would happen to escape and spread to a neighboring area, it may be another member of the association who is probably going to burn anyway,” Weir said. “It is neighbor helping neighbor, sharing resources. “

Many of the associations receive financial aid through federal and local grants and donations, including some vehicles from local fire departments that support the burn associations.

“It’s a win-win situation for not only the landowners but also the community in general,” Weir said. “I’d love to see every county in the state have them.”

For landowners interested in joining a burn association, or starting an association if none are nearby, information can be found at <http://www.oklahomaprescribedfirecouncil.okstate.edu>. Also, OSU Cooperative Extension county educators can be contacted for additional information.