

Illinois Prescribed Burn Manager Certification Board
Minutes of the 14th Meeting
(Subject to approval at the 15th Meeting)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Heron Room
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

13-1) Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees

The meeting was called to order by Mike Wefer at 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Bob Edgin, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC); Mike Wefer, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Division of Wildlife; Les Albert and Kevin Schott, Illinois State Fire Marshall (SFM); Tom Wilson, IDNR, Division of Forestry; Jody Shimp, IDNR, Division of Natural Heritage.

Members Absent: Jack Pizzo, The Pizzo Group

Others Present: Marni English, INPC

13-2) Adoption of Agenda

It was moved by Tom Wilson, seconded by Les Albert, and carried that the agenda be adopted.

13-3) Approval of the Minutes of the 13th Meeting, December 8, 2015

It was moved by Les Albert, seconded by Bob Edgin, and carried that the Minutes of the 13th meeting, December 8, 2015, be approved.

13-4) Remaining Meeting Schedule for FY 2016

Discussed as New Business under Item 9.

13-5) Status of Certification of Prescribed Burn Manager Process (Wilson)

Tom Wilson reported they collect the money for fiscal year but maintain the number of certifications by calendar year. For FY16, 36 burn manager applications have been approved, 33 of which were paid, and 21 of 36 approved for the calendar year. A total of \$1,650 was deposited with the Comptroller. There are a total of 601 approved burn managers in the system.

Mike Wefer asked everyone to look over the attached Report to the Director. (Appendix I)
It was motioned by Tom Wilson, seconded by Les Albert, and carried that the Report to the Director be approved.

Old Business

13-6) Introduction of members and review of the Illinois Prescribed Burning Act – Both Statute and Administrative Rule.

Jody Shimp works with the IDNR, Division of Natural Heritage which is responsible for threatened and endangered species and high quality natural communities. He has been involved with prescribed fires since 1986. He is a member of the IDNR Prescribed Fire Working Group and the Illinois Prescribed Fire Council.

Tom Wilson, IDNR, Division Chief of Forestry, works with the Wildland Fire Program which includes prescribed fire, as well as the Wildland Fire Program, deploying for the out of state wildfires.

Marni English, INPC, organizes the meetings, records and does the minutes for the INPC and IPBMCB meetings.

Mike Wefer, IDNR Division of Wildlife, Section Head of Field Operations, serving the District Wildlife Biologists. Has been on the IPBMCB since 2013 and is a member of the IDNR Prescribed Fire Working Group. He holds a Florida Burn Managers Certificate and has been burning in Illinois since the 1980s.

Les Albert, Deputy Director, Office of the State Fire Marshall. He worked for the Decatur Fire Department for 29 years, serving as Chief the last 10 of those years. He then taught at the University of Illinois Fire Institute.

Kevin Schott, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the State Fire Marshall. He oversees the operations staff such as inspectors of fire prevention, fire certification specialist, boiler, elevator and arson. He began in fire services as a volunteer in Carlinville and spent 22 years as a firefighter with the Air Guard. He will be taking Les Albert's position on the board.

Bob Edgin, INPC Field Representative, working with private landowners securing land and water or nature preserve conservation easements. He has been a leading burner in acres and number of burns with the INPC and on the Prescribed Burn Taskforce for Illinois. He is taking Randy Heidorn's position on the board.

Mike Wefer discussed the Illinois Prescribed Burning Act (525 ILCS37/) and the administrative rule.

Tom Wilson reported on the history of the Illinois Prescribed Burning Act and when the certification of managers began.

3-7) Equivalent State Prescribed burn Manager Certification Programs: Status Update (Pizzo)

Tom Wilson summarized for new members the issues with certifying instructors to National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards. To be certified to teach under the NWCG is a lengthy and complicated process. Jack has taken the NWCG training and has adapted the modules to allow instructors to be certified in-house to deliver the classes required for the Illinois prescribed burn manager certification.

13-8) Complexity of Certification (Wilson/Wefer)

Mike Wefer commented that previous board members started a discussion about having a master certification beyond the basic certification.

Tom explained it was a complicated issued because one of the concerns was the large range of complexity within burns across the state. They started the discussion whether they should differentiate between low complexity burns and very difficult, complex burns. A solution has not been reached but a number of ideas have been suggested with no recommendations made.

Les Albert asked if other states are doing something similar, with different classifications or tiers of managers.

Tom and Mike were not aware of any.

Mike expressed concern for grading complexity or having special certification as it would be complicated to develop, could create bottlenecks, and might devalue the basic certification.

Tom commented that it could create difficulty for those having the experience burning but may not have the special certification.

Kevin Schott asked who does the training of prescribed burn managers.

Tom answered that it is a combination between himself, IFSI, Forest Service and opportunities out-of-state.

Jody Shimp commented that those who go through the qualifications to become certified are not really exposed to the Act and understand what the certification means. He said that if they understand the limitations, they might take more responsibility for becoming more experienced as the complexity goes up.

Tom answered that he sends out the Act to some and that maybe we need to send it out again.

Mike explained that in Florida they had a week long academy. He would like to see Illinois get there but we do not have the bodies or resources yet.

Tom commented it is hard to get people there for five days.

Les referred to Section 1565.20 of the administrative rules for certified prescribed burn manager, Section B, No. 3, maybe more than two burns as an apprentice is needed for certification.

Tom stated that it could be added in the task book.

Bob Edgin commented that he gradually introduces each step of a burn to interns, and gradually increases the complexity. He feels it is the responsibility of the supervisor of the apprentice when they approve an apprentice for certification. Their reputation is on the line.

Tom commented that he stresses this to those he has taught who will be signing to certify an individual to receive their certificate. He indicated in situations where an accident or fatality happens during a burn, the records of who signed off are looked at.

Bob expressed the need for more certified burn managers to get more fire on the ground but we also need to protect the integrity of the program.

Tom agreed. Incidences like when the siding was melted hurts the overall program and the public's view of it. Referring to Les' comment that we need a short task book to see what they have done as a checklist to see they were exposed to.

Les commented that the task book would help protect the supervisor when signing off because the documentation is there.

Bob indicated physical ability should be included in a task book. He also felt the task book would help individuals keep on track, particularly those who are serious about getting certification.

Mike expressed concerns about discrimination by requiring the supervisor to judge physical ability in the task book.

Les commented that when they are breaking a line, this would be an indicator of the individual's fitness.

Mike asked if it should be the apprentice to certify they are healthy enough.

Tom suggested a checklist indicating the individual does not have heart disease, respiratory disease, etc.

Kevin indicated the Illinois Dept. of Labor requires Firefighters to complete a questionnaire and if you answer "no" to any of the questions, you are required to see a doctor.

Les asked Tom if our present training requires this.

Tom answered they had to do a PAC test, medical screening and health screening questionnaire for wildland fire crews going out West.

Mike asked if they wanted to make this an action item.

Tom said he could pull it together with any suggestions from the board on the task book and he could draft something and send it out.

It was motioned by Tom Wilson, seconded by Les Albert, and carried to create a certified prescribed burn manager task book.

14-9) Discussion of Meeting Frequency

It was discussed to hold IPBMCB meetings annually, how to submit the report to the Director and when the annual meeting should be held.

It was motioned by Tom Wilson, seconded by Jody Shimp, and carried that the IPBMCB meetings be held annually on the second Tuesday in July.

14-10) Public Comment

Les thanked the Board for allowing him to be a part of it and all the work they have done.

14-11) Other Business

Kevin asked if there has been anything done in the past at fire service conferences to increase awareness of certified burn managers. He indicated the Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts Conference is in June, the Illinois Fire Marshalls Conference is in October, and the Illinois Firefighters Conference is in October. He suggested a 45-60 minute presentation on what the Illinois Prescribed Burn Managers Certification is to bring awareness to the program.

Mike asked who should be in charge of doing this.

Tom suggested a panel to do this.

Kevin suggested a special meeting in the fall to discuss this.

Mike was unsure if it was the purview of the Board.

Tom indicated he was willing to go forward with this.

Les agreed with the idea of having a panel.

Jody indicated he would discuss it at the upcoming Illinois Prescribed Fire Council meeting.

Jody asked if the IPBMCB had a website.

Tom answered that it is under the Forestry website.

14-12) Adjournment

It was moved by Jody Shimp, seconded by Kevin Schott, and carried that the meeting be adjourned at 11:08 a.m.