Dear SIPBA member,

In 2019, SIPBA volunteers were faced with an incredible amount of spring rain that persisted through the entire burn season, finally letting up at the end of May. That’s when our membership showed what they were made of!

About 25 dedicated landowners put in hundreds of hours of time for the last few weeks of the burn season to ensure their neighbors got their burns accomplished, and together they produced another banner year for SIPBA: 3496 acres in 30 burns!

With lots of grateful landowners and another successful season behind us, we took the opportunity to reflect on how this kind of work really gets done.

1) The process starts with you, our valuable SIPBA members. When you join the Association and express your desire to use prescribed fire, we add your name to our ranks so that you can attend trainings, meetings, and prescribed burns with your neighbors. Then we can provide guidance and help you learn how to build your own fire lines, and we produce your burn plan and file for the appropriate permits.

2) Once you have completed your fire lines, we can add you to the burn list for the upcoming season, and you will be eagerly watching your phone and checking your email for the first burn announcements.

3) When the burn season is in full swing, things move quickly! The weather may change and opportunities may arise. We could be contacting you about your burn any time. One thing we absolutely rely on is our membership, because without the crew, there can be no burn. After all, co-ops like ours can only function with your involvement.

As you can see, you are the most important part of prescribed fire in Southern Illinois, from the beginning to the end. To all of our dedicated neighbors, we say THANK YOU for another great season!

Sincerely,

Jesse Riechman, Coordinator

Visit us at www.sipba.org
SIPBA’s Board of Directors meets 3-4 times a year and deals with the many aspects of our non-profit organization and its mission to “help private landowners use prescribed burning in Southern Illinois”. Here are a few thoughts that help us stay focused on our mission and operating goals:

• Many landowners in Southern Illinois can use prescribed fire to manage their forest and grasslands, but it must be done properly by trained and organized crews with special attention to safety and environmental issues.

• SIPBA was created to help private landowners use the Co-Op concept to do prescribed burns for minimal cost, much like the old-time threshing crews and barn raisings.

• The true cost of providing equipment, training people and managing burns is $500 to over $1,000 per fire. A member pays less than $200 per year and gets all the “learn to burn” experience for contributing only a few hours of their time. Member dues and fees cover our basic organization costs and any gaps that might occur in grant funding.

• Forest management, environmental and wildlife organizations also want, and have funding for, more prescribed burning in Southern Illinois, but much of their targeted areas have limited land control and they often require cooperation of abutting private landowners.

• SIPBA has a cadre of partners and an operating process that is working well for over 12 years to get lots of prescribed burning done on private and public lands.

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• Government and private grants are willing to pay most of SIPBAs operating budget in exchange for our “sweat equity” in the process. We do the work (burn plans, line building, crewing burns and mop-ups) and they pay the bills for equipment, staff, training and more.

• We want to be sure that all SIPBA members (and prospective ones) understand the "big picture" of how we operate and interact with our partners.

• The more each member does, the more we can do for them. We can have more burns of all sizes if we put out more crews on "ready-to-burn sites" when conditions are favorable.

Remember, board meetings are open to all members and comments are always welcome. Check sipba.org for the next meeting time and location. Hope to see you then. -John Hemphill

The Upcoming Burn Season

The fall burn season will begin when most of the leaves have fallen and daytime humidity drops below 50%. Usually this occurs near the end of October.

If you would like your property to be placed on the fall burn list contact Jesse Riechman at 618/967-4213.

Remember that your priority on the list is influenced by many factors. Some of these include a burn plan and permit on file, proof of landowner liability insurance, inspected burn lines, and prior participation in other member’s burns and training. SIPBA burns are done as conditions allow and exact scheduling is not possible. The landowner or their representative must be present at the time of the burn.

We work for food! It has been tradition for the landowner to show their appreciation by providing lunch for the burn crew.

Are you planning to burn next season? Be sure to review our Fire Break Guidelines on the back page --->
SIPBA Guidelines for Fire Break Construction

Prescribed burning means that fire is only allowed in the specific area that is planned, and fire breaks should be sufficient to exclude fire from unplanned areas without relying on volunteers to contain it. High quality fire breaks contribute to the safety of the crew and help the landowner and Association meet their objectives. In many cases, regularly maintained trails make excellent fire breaks and contribute to accessibility and recreational value on your property.

NOTE: As a SIPBA member, it is your responsibility to contact a coordinator when your lines are prepared so that we can schedule your burn. If you need any guidance or assistance, please contact Jesse Riechman or a crew coordinator.

Natural Fire Breaks

Use existing or natural fire breaks whenever possible. These may include rock bluffs, creeks, rivers, roads, or adjacent tilled fields. At times it may be worthwhile to adjust the burn unit boundary to utilize these features. Some additional line preparation may be required to improve existing features to be used as fire breaks. For example, brush and dead branches may need to be cleared out of a creek bed, or a small fire break may need to be constructed around a gap in a rock bluff.

Grass Fields

1. Tilled, plowed or disked line – The minimum width of the fire break will be twice the height of the tallest vegetation in the burn unit or 4 feet, whichever is greater. The treatment may need to be repeated until thatch in the fire break is eliminated. Sometimes a second pass in the opposite direction with the equipment is very effective. In tall warm-season grasses, supplement the tilled line with a mowed strip inside the burn unit that is 10-30 feet wide.

The grass in this mowed strip can be 8-10 inches high and will still see the benefits of fire, while keeping fire intensity to a manageable level near the line. The crew will thank you!

2. Green Strip (Wheat or Clover) – In the spring, some fields are too soggy for equipment to operate in. In this case, prepare the fire break in the fall when the ground is firm, seeding the disked or tilled soil with Wheat or Clover. The width requirements are the same as mentioned above. The resulting “green strip” will provide a good fire break for your spring burn, with no need to worry about getting equipment stuck in the spring mud.

3. Mowed line – In some cases, a fire line can be continuously maintained by a finish (lawn) mower, with a minimum amount of dry thatch left behind. The width requirements are the same, but thatch removal by rake or leaf blower may be required to form an effective fire break. NOTE: If an established path is to be used for a fire break in a field, a tilled line, green strip, or additional mowing may be required to form an effective fire break.

Forested Burn Units

1. Building a fire break - Use a leaf blower or rake to create a 4-5 foot wide fire break, leaving mineral soil exposed. Blow or rake around standing dead trees (snags) if they are tall enough to fall or throw embers across the line. Alternatively, snags can be cut down if it is safe to do so. In addition, blow or rake around dead logs and heavy brush within 10 feet of the line.

2. Protecting trees – Most species of mature trees will tend to survive a low-intensity fire. Fire will generally thin out seedlings and promote oak species. If necessary, care should be taken to remove large amounts of brush or leaves from around valuable trees to minimize fire damage.

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