

BURN CREW VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Conard Environmental Research Area

Thank you for your interest in assisting us with prescribed burns at the Conard Environmental Research Area (CERA). The majority of prescribed burns are conducted in the spring (late-March through early May) and fall (November-December). We have one set of small experimental prairie plots that receive a summer burn treatment in late August. We plan prescribed burns for experimental prairie plots each year in the spring and fall and each fall for our forest plots. Prescribed burns in other areas are determined year to year based primarily upon management and restoration needs. Fire is used to control invasive species, prevent establishment of woody species in grassland areas, alter the dominance of certain vegetation types, prepare an area for seeding, or to research the effects of fire on a myriad of physical and biological characteristics of prairie, savanna, and forest ecosystems.

We cannot schedule prescribed burns more than a few days in advance because they depend on weather conditions. Consequently, it is often difficult to find help beyond our core group of faculty and staff. We rely heavily on a pool of volunteers who we can contact via email or phone a day or two in advance of a burn. A final it s a go email or phone call is made to volunteers the day of or within a few hours of the start time for the burn.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can help us in one or more of the following ways by:

1. Participating directly in the burn crew (this requires training prior to the burn).
2. Watching at a distance for fire that has escaped from our control
3. Providing transportation for people interested in participating or watching.
4. Photographing the fire.

1. Participation in the burn crew

Participation in the burn crew means that you will be working directly with the fire. This requires that you will have had training at some time previous to the burn, such as at a prescribed burn training session. If you are notified of intent to burn and have responded to the CERA Manager that you can participate, you will be expected to arrive at a designated meeting time and place and to stay for the duration of the burn.

Volunteering for a burn crew is an exceptional experience but it comes with the following responsibilities:

1. Confirm with the CERA Manager that you can assist with the burn crew.
2. Provide your own transportation to CERA.
3. Arrive promptly at the time and location arranged previously by the CERA Manager for the burn. This may vary for different burns.
4. Wear appropriate clothing and dress in layers. A list of recommendations for clothing is provided below.
5. Bring water and a light snack, like a granola bar, that you can keep in your pocket for an energy boost during the burn if necessary.
6. Be prepared to stay for the duration of the burn. The CERA Manager can give you an estimate of the time involved for a particular burn.

Recommended clothing:

Leather work boots or shoes

Natural fiber clothing (cotton or wool) for both outer and inner garments

NO frayed clothing

Glasses, sunglasses or protective eyewear (if you have them)

Contacts are NOT recommended

Something to keep long hair out of your face

We will provide the following on the day of the burn:

Leather gloves

Helmet with face shield and bandana

Nomex fire-resistant suit, when available

Any other fire-fighting equipment such as backpack water tanks, flappers, rakes,
radios

A map of and orientation to the burn unit, burn strategy and
emergency plans

****NOTE:** If you are allergic to poison ivy, please notify burn crewmembers to ensure that you are not exposed to smoke when we are burning in areas where poison ivy is present.

2. Watching at a distance

You are **always** welcome to come out and watch prescribed burns taking place. However, you will need to arrange for your own transportation to CERA. When you arrive, we will let you know what locations would be best for viewing and avoiding smoke inhalation. Please let the CERA Manager know if you are planning on watching. Under circumstances where we are short on burn crewmembers, it will be helpful to know if we can rely on an extra set of eyes to watch for escaped fires. This will not require that you assist with the fire, but you may be given a radio to stay in contact with a member of the burn crew.

3. Providing transportation

This may seem like such a small way to help but it is actually one of the most important needs. It is too difficult to arrange transportation from the college carpool on such short notice. If you can help by simply providing a way for people to get out to CERA, please contact the CERA Manager. The Manager will direct anyone needing a ride out to CERA to you for assistance.

4. Photographing prescribed burns

Every prescribed burn is different, especially fire in different habitats. We are looking for people interested in photographing prescribed burns as a way of recording basics on fire behavior, discussing prescribed burn strategies, having visuals for educational programs and presentations on prescribed fire, website development, and capturing volunteer participation from college and community members. If interested, please contact the CERA Manager. We can provide a digital camera, or if you use your own SLR camera, we can cover the cost of the film and processing for 35 mm prints.

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING!