Impact Project Report

Becoming a Certified Burn Boss to Bring Prescribed Fire Back to Piedmont Forests and Prairies

Issue

Prescribed fire is both medicine and prevention, but it's limited by too few trained burn leaders and too little public understanding, so Master Naturalist Gini Bell joined the Triangle Prescribed Burn Association and is completing burn boss certification to help close both gaps.

Project





For generations, fire has been kept out of our forests, but many Piedmont landscapes evolved with regular low-intensity fire. Without it, our forests have lost the open, diverse habitat that native plants and wildlife depend on. North Carolina is urbanizing quickly, leading the nation in acres of wildland-urban interface. Its forests also carry heavy fuel loads, which makes them more prone to severe wildfire. Prescribed fire is medicine for fire-dependent landscapes and species, and it reduces the fuel that feeds dangerous wildfires.

Two things limit prescribed fire's use: too few people trained to lead burns safely, and too little public understanding of why fire belongs on the landscape. Bell was inspired to act after reading *When It All Burns: Fighting Fire in a Transformed World* by Jordan Thomas. She joined the Triangle Prescribed Burn Association and volunteered on two prescribed burns, completed the burn boss course and passed the exam, participated in webinars on burn plan review and mapping and on cultural burning. She is now planning her certifying burn at Luna Blues Blueberry Farm in Orange County. She is applying this at home too. She worked with the Forest Service on a land management plan for her family's land, with the long-term goal of establishing a Piedmont prairie and eventually using prescribed fire.

Results

- Two volunteer burns, the burn boss course and exam passed, and webinars on burn plan review, mapping, and cultural burning.
- Certifying burn in progress: She is developing the burn plan, which will complete my certification and add a qualified burn boss to the regional pool.
- Building understanding: Learning about cultural burning and talking with others about fire on our land are part of a broader effort to make fire a familiar, well-understood tool. Each burn she helps with is a chance to show neighbors what prescribed fire looks like when it's done carefully.

Student

This project is the work of Gini Bell

Highlight

Partner Organization

Triangle Prescribed Burn Association

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