

ALABAMA PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL

Kent Hanby

Steering Committee Member, Retired Professor, Auburn University

MR. MARK MELVIN: Our first council presenter is from Alabama, and that's Kent Hanby. I've actually had the privilege to burn with Kent. He's a professor and is retired now from Auburn University. He has had a long, prosperous career in fire management and fire education, and he's been a mentor to many students. It's been a pleasure to work with him through the years. And although he's retired, he's stayed engaged, and he was largely responsible for the formation or the reconvening of the Alabama council and is currently on the steering committee.

MR. HANBY: Thanks, Mark. 2008 has been a great year. How many times have you heard that lately? But for the Alabama Prescribed Fire Council, it has been a great year, because we've gotten a lot of things done. John Stivers took over as our first president in the current state of affairs and really spark-plugged and got a lot of things going. The Alabama council got its original start back in the '90s. It was a function of the Alabama Forestry Commission. It was a group of sort of stakeholder-type people that were pulled together to discuss issues and make recommendations to the commissioners of the Alabama Forestry Commission, and it lapsed there for a while. And when the coalition got sort of cooking along a little bit, some of us got together and tried to revitalize the Alabama council. And we felt that it was important that it be totally independent of any agency so that it could, in effect, work effectively across those kind of boundaries. And we had a stakeholder group meeting and put together a steering committee, and the steering committee developed a set of bylaws and sort of got off and going and elected John and a slate of officers, and they've done a great job. All of our documents that we've put together, our minutes, our bylaws, that kind of stuff, is on our Web site. And we use our Web site right now as our repository of all of our official documents.

One of the first things that John got going to try and stimulate interest was to get people to recommend or suggest slogans. And there was a lot of participation, and we have a list of them on this slide. I don't know, there are probably 20 or 30 of them on there. Some of those include things like: "A prescribed fire is the safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health, and reduce wildfire risk." You've seen that before several times during the conference. We liked it, we've adopted it, we've put it out there, and we think it's an important message to get across to the public. We visualize our Web site as being a public information device as well as information for those of us who work within the council, but we also hope it will be helpful to folks in other councils in other states. We hope to have a link to all of your Web sites on our Web site, but we'd rather see the coalition have its Web site and all those Web sites be linked there.

A couple of the other slogans, or whatever you want to call them, that came out that we sort of thought were neat, include one of them that addresses what Lane [Green] was talking about the other day. John in particular likes this one:

"Only you . . ." the Smokey the Bear line, right? "Only you can promote prescribed fire." And, again, as we have heard numerous times during this conference, we're trying to put the burden back on us as individuals to make this thing work and make it happen. We can't depend on somebody else to pull it off.

"Mild Fire, Wildfire" was an article that appeared in the *Alabama's Treasured Forests* magazine. We had a poster basically covering the article the other night in the session. The whole idea is to be proactive versus reactive. I like to think of it as budgeted spending versus emergency spending. Another one is: "We're fired up about burning for forest health." Another one, "Rx fire—a prescription for healthy forests."

Membership recruitment has been sort of open and wide. Basically, anybody that slips up and lets me know they have an interest in fire, or lets one of the others in the group know, their name ends up on the list and they're a member. We have no dues, and we don't anticipate having any. We're not organizing into any kind of 501(c)(3) or that type of thing. At this point we want to stay fairly loose. We are trying to actively solicit agencies, landowners, and those types of groups to participate in the organization. The steering committee meets twice a year. It's basically made up of 15 people within the state, and it crosses all of what we perceive to be the stakeholder groups in the state of Alabama, including the air quality people in the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, and two representatives from the National Weather Service in Alabama. We're going to have an annual membership meeting in October, and we expect to stimulate participation in those meetings by getting continuing forestry education CFEs, CEUs, whatever you call them, for certified burn managers, for registered foresters, and for SAF [Society of American Foresters] members.

We have nine working groups within the council, and they are: policy and legislative; fire effects; equipment; litigation claims and insurance; public relations, education, and outreach; grants; Web site; fuels, fire behavior, and smoke management; and contractors and vendors. There's not a chair of any of those groups, and there's a list of names out there on that Web site of the people that have, in effect, said they're interested in participating in those groups, but it's up to those individuals to take up the challenge and take on what they want to take or what they want to recommend for the steering committee to adopt.

We're doing graphics work. They're working on getting some stuff done so we can put together T-shirts, hats, bumper stickers, and so forth. It's fun to see those things around that different groups have done. And, hopefully, we'll have more of that out and available. In February of this year, next month, there's to be a demonstration burn for the media and for any other interested people. It will be done, I expect, on the Talladega Ranger District of the National Forest, and there's going to be a big effort to get as much media as we can there