

# KENTUCKY PRESCRIBED FIRE COUNCIL

John Morgan

Secretary, Small Game Program Coordinator, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

MR. MARK MELVIN: Thank you, Lane [Green]. Our next presenter is not on the agenda either, but John Morgan from Kentucky was able to, at the last minute, put a trip together to join us, and I'm glad he did. I had the opportunity to kind of meet John via phone probably 18 months ago, maybe two years ago, and actually met him at a conference in Pennsylvania. He's rolled up his sleeves and really has provided the leadership and the drive and determination to get a council started in Kentucky. He's the current secretary of the council, and he's with the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

MR. MORGAN: Thank you, Mark. I appreciate that introduction. It's nice to be with a group of folks that I usually don't see. Usually I go to meetings and I see a lot of familiar faces, and here I'm not seeing many, so I appreciate the opportunity to be here on behalf of the council.

We're really excited to be a part of this new budding organization as we are a budding organization ourselves. And I look at Mark as a major member, even though he's in Georgia, because of how much we leaned on him to develop our council. As Lane just said, thanks to many of you here, we really just copied what was successful in many of the other states, and it was very easy for us to get established by taking the information that you learned and applying it in Kentucky, and it worked very well.

Let's begin with an overview of our short history. As Mark just brought up, for some reason he just called me, and I still don't know how he got my name to call about getting a council started. But it just so happened that I was in the process of writing a quail restoration plan, and forming a council was actually one of the strategies that we had in that plan. So I took that idea to our leadership in Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, and they quickly embraced the concept. I talked to a couple of key partners and we had a great opportunity come up in Kentucky. In January of 2008, we had a smoke management workshop where many of the practitioners of prescribed fire in Kentucky were in one meeting. Unfortunately, we didn't have an official representative there, but I had had some conversations beforehand with others who were there, and it really helped jump-start the movement towards having an initial meeting to form the council.

That initial meeting was in May of 2008, hosted at our Fish and Wildlife headquarters in Frankfort. We were pretty happy with the attendance. We had 44 attendees representing 20 different organizations. Those were state, federal, some private entities, some nongovernment organizations, and largely wildlife conservation groups. Most of the representatives of their organizations presented their perspectives on prescribed fire in the state and why they were interested in the council. Through that process, we put together a bylaws subcommittee, and that's where we stole a lot of ideas from the bylaws in many of the existing councils. So that subcommittee had a lot working for them. By August 2008, we had an adoption process meeting. We had roughly

30 people in attendance. We went through the bylaws that that subcommittee put together line by line and adopted them in that meeting. We also went through the process of selecting a steering committee at that time. We started with and still have seven members for our steering committee, and after hearing some of what the other councils are doing, I think that may be far too small, and we need to grow that. But as our council develops, that's something we can consider. We also went a step further and established some working committees and assigned chairs. From those 30 attendees, almost every person ended up on a committee. So we already have a committee structure formed. The next step is to get those committees to actually do something.

Now initially, since I wasn't on the agenda, I figured I'd be last and you'd need something to lighten the mood, so I added this picture of a squirrel who apparently prefers Budweiser to Old Style. Is this innate or learned? I would probably say it is a learned trait for a squirrel to drink beer at a park, I don't know. Anyhow, we hope our training committee serves as a network for training opportunities in our state. We have envisioned that group coordinating with our Kentucky Fire Training Center to respond to needs of practitioners in the state, so that the training is pertinent to them, and develop some minimum training standards. We have no certified burning legislation in Kentucky, so we hope that committee can help put together some standards for us and, along those lines, develop some minimum burn plan requirements for legislation as well. We have developed a research committee to prioritize research needs in the state, summarize some literature that exists in the state regarding ecological effects of prescribed fire, work with our University of Kentucky Extension to develop some fire training for landowners, since we've essentially lost our burning culture in Kentucky, on private lands in particular, and maintain records on fire activity to keep a current total on what we are accomplishing and where.

Another committee we have is the legislative committee, looking to compile our prescribed fire legislation. Hopefully, other states will see this coalition serving as a point of contact for that. Perhaps some of it has already been done, so we'll have some interest in how the organization here handles that. We hope they will draft fire legislation for our state based on Florida and Georgia and possibly South Carolina as key models. We need to identify sponsors for our legislation within the state, and investigate liability insurance for practitioners that we probably currently don't have but hope to have.

Of course, we have an air quality committee. I'm sure we'll hear a lot of states talk about this. We have some folks that are staying current with regulation and policy changes in reference to air quality and smoke created from prescribed burning. Also, we want to assist in development of those Kentucky air quality plans that will be coming up here in the future and evaluate smoke models and how we can use those in Kentucky.