

Butler County Open Burning Regulations

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The drought has created conditions that will prevent a lot of rangeland burning. In most cases, we would recommend against burning this year. The following information is being provided for those few situations where burning may still be a management tool this year. In addition to the usual considerations when burning as a grassland management tool and the safety concerns, a new topic was introduced in 2011: The Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management plan. This plan was developed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) in response to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality standards.

Benefits of Prescribed Burning: Research and experience have shown that fire can be used as a management practice for native and introduced grasslands, hay meadows, and establishing and managing new native grass stands. It can recycle nutrients tied up in old plant growth, stimulate tillering, control many woody and herbaceous plants, improve grazing distribution, reduce wildfire hazards, improve wildlife habitat, and increase livestock production in stocker operations. To gain these benefits, fire must be used under specified conditions and with proper timing. Timing of the burn is a critical element for obtaining the desired response. To control or reduce undesired plants, they should be burned at the weakest point in their growth stage. In order to damage a particular plant, burning must occur when the plant is actively growing or has buds above the soil surface. Burning to favor desired grass plants should be done when they are just starting to green up. The native grasses should have an average of ½ to 2 inches of new growth when they are burned. Recommended burning dates in our area for native warm-season grasses for livestock production are April 10 to 30, depending on growing conditions. The dates will also vary for different management goals.

Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan: The reasons for having this plan are numerous. As a result of exceeding the ozone standard, KDHE, EPA and the agricultural community agreed that a plan to reduce potential smoke impacts and address smoke emissions from the Flint Hills should be developed. The real and potential public health and economic impacts for both the urban and rural communities are substantial. All of the examples of additional requirements associated with non attainment cost money to implement and are burdensome. The plan includes the Fire Management Practices document as a resource for conducting burns that minimize smoke. A web site is available to provide this resource as well as weather conditions and many tools to assist in the planning of a prescribed burn. It is www.ksfire.org

The Butler County Resolution Regulating Open Burning was adopted in response to the need for prescribed burning as a grassland management tool and the Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan. In summary: The person who plans to conduct the outdoor open burn must contact the appropriate local 911 center or fire service agency immediately prior to commencing the burn and when the burn is completed. Permission is required for burns of less than 40 acres and will be granted if certain standards are met. These are listed in the County Burning Resolution. Ag burns of 40 acres or more requires notification. Butler County Emergency Communications numbers are: 316-320-1294 or 316-322-4398. In accordance with the new KDHE regulation, **NO open burning will be allowed during April with the exception of:** 1) Burning for range, pasture, or CRP management 2) Burning of residential trash on premises with 5 or less dwelling units and 3) cooking or ceremonial burning. Web links to the Butler County Resolution, a listing of the Butler County Fire Departments, The SMP web site, and other prescribed burning information is available on our KSRE/Butler County site: www.butler.ksu.edu