

Building Prescribed Fire Capacity at the Land Conservancy of West Michigan: Successes and Challenges



February 4, 2020
Justin Heslinga, Stewardship Director
justin@naturenearby.org



LandConservancy
OF WEST MICHIGAN



Program Overview



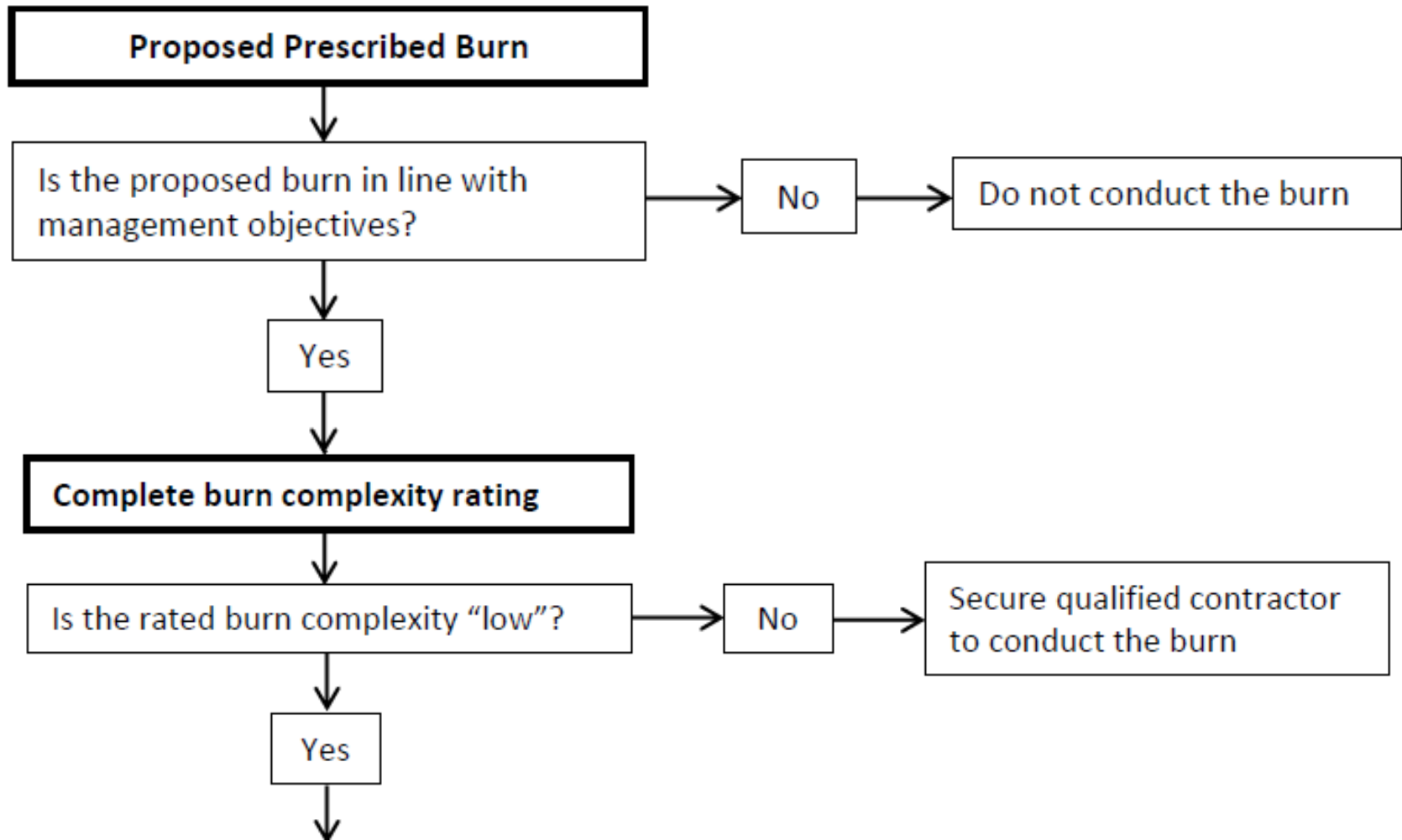
The Beginning

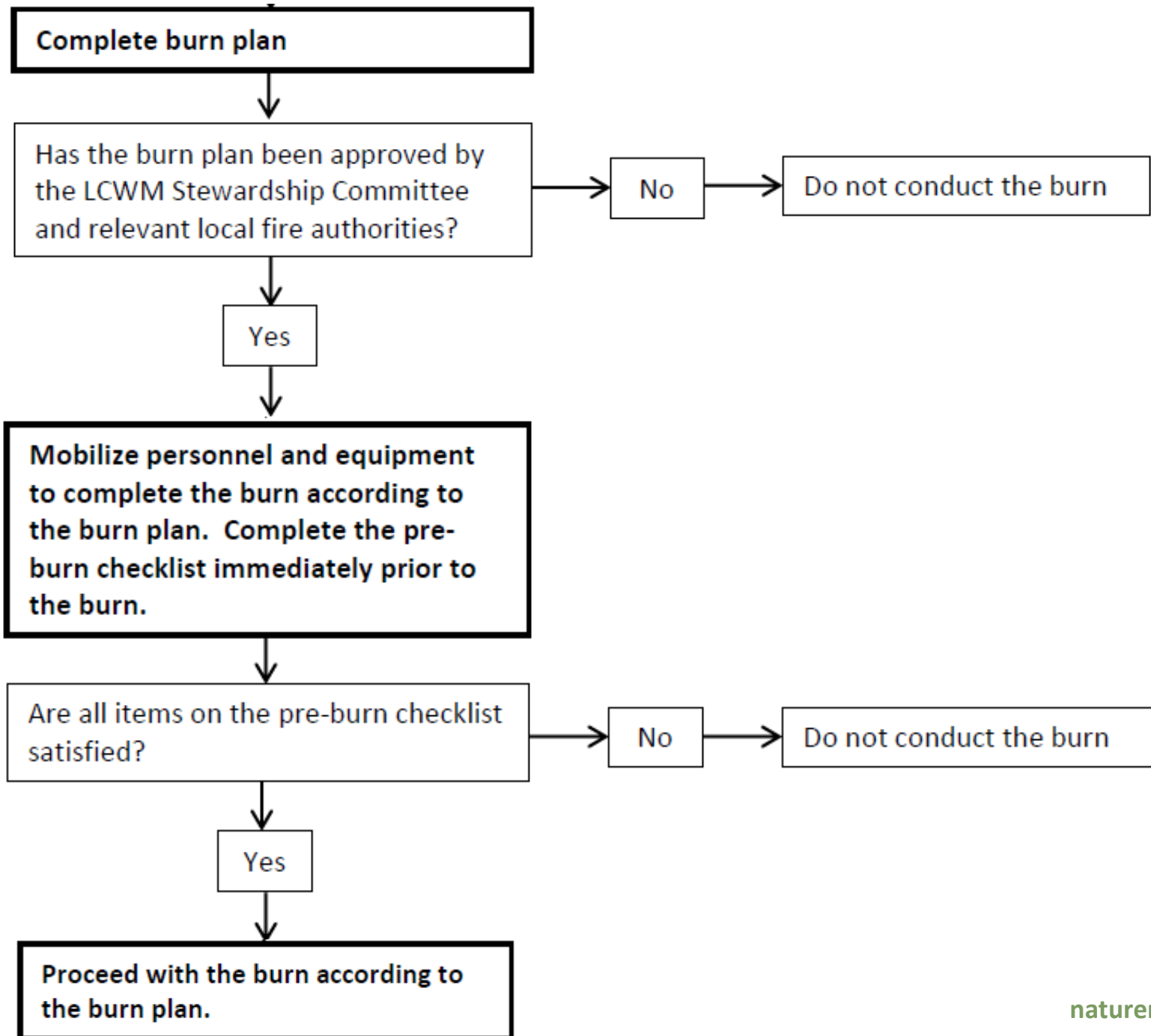


Risk Management

- Liability & insurance
- Go/no-go decision tree & internal policy







Crew and Training

- Staff and volunteers
- Initial requirements
 - Complete S-130/S-190 or
 - Take LCWM training
- Ongoing requirements
 - Every 2 years...
 - Participate in a burn
 - Re-take LCWM training



Scope



- 3 - 5 burns per year
- Low-complexity
- LCWM-owned lands only (for now)



Equipment

- Pickup truck with 100-gallon slip-on unit
- ATV with 26-gallon tank, electric pump
- Honda WX-15 pump with 200' hose
- Indian pumps – 10
- Hand tools – 10
- Drip torches – 3
- Leaf blower – 1
- Chainsaw – 1
- Two-way radios – 10
- Prescribed burn ahead signs – 2
- Nomex & PPE – 12 sets
- Kestrel weather meter





Successes

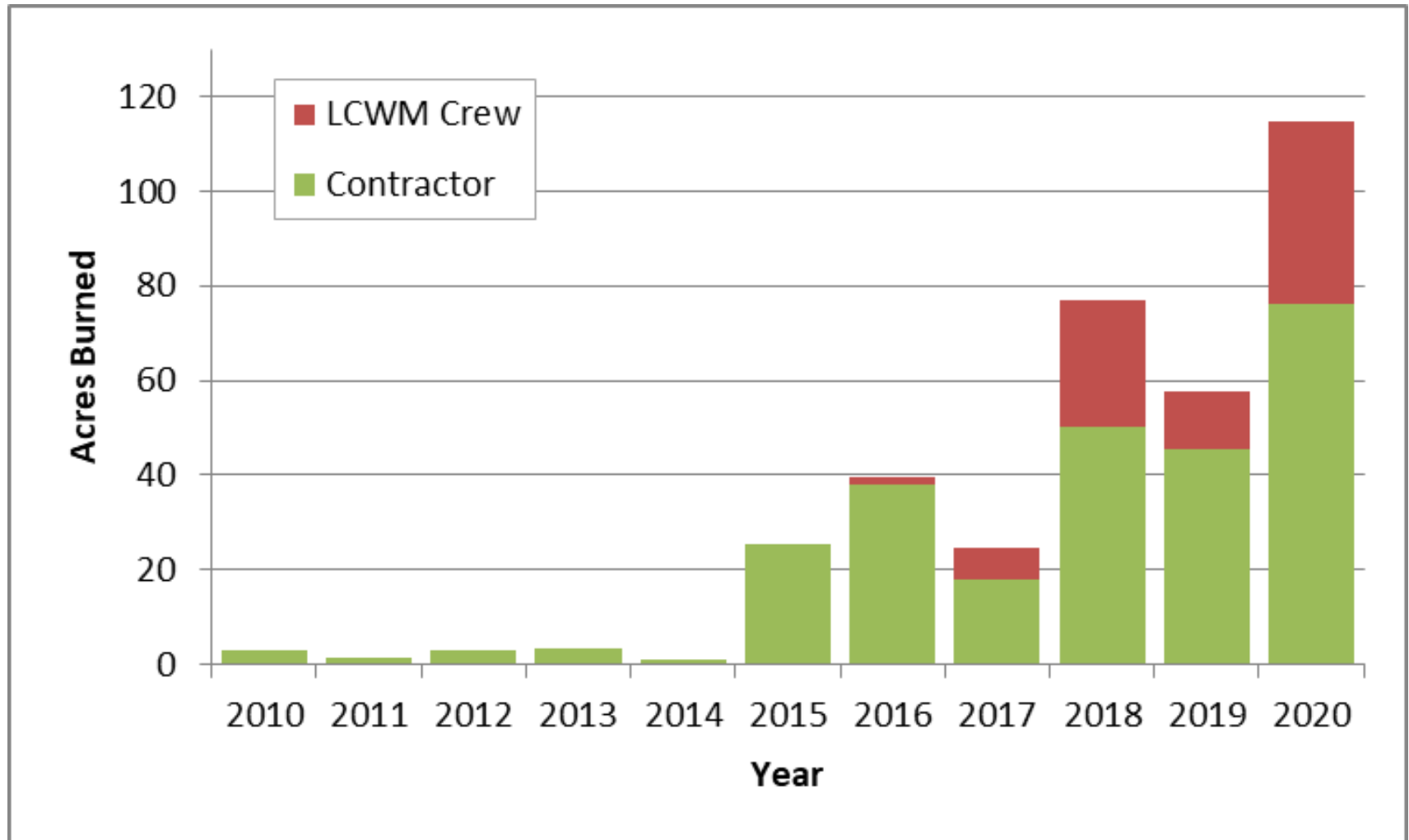


Decreased Burn Costs

- \$15,000 initial investment
- \$3,000 saved per burn (average, vs. contracted cost)
- Paid for itself in 5 burns (first 2 years of program)



Increased Burn Acreage



Increased Flexibility: Timing



Increased Flexibility: 'Experimental' Burns



Training and Education

- LCWM crew training – 120 participants
- Hands-on experience for Rx fire students (e.g., GVSU)
- After-action reviews
- Burn notification letters (3,200+ recipients)





Challenges



Inexperience

- Always working with inexperienced people and crews
- Write burn plans accordingly
- Modify plans in the field



Competing Priorities



Lack of Leadership Training



Partnerships and Expansion



Thank You



Justin Heslinga, Stewardship Director
justin@naturenearby.org



LandConservancy
OF WEST MICHIGAN