

Knowledge Exchange Tour Phragmites and Tallgrass Prairie Burning in Ontario

On July 17 and 18, 2012 Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff, along with members from Ontario Stewardship, Tallgrass Fire Science Consortium (Wisconsin) and Natural Resources Canada met in southwestern Ontario to exchange information and share their knowledge on the use of fire to eradicate Phragmites (an invasive reed/grass species) and manage Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannah habitat.

The group meet in Windsor, Ontario to tour the Ojibway Prairie Nature Reserve and tallgrass prairie species at risk relocation projects. The next day they visited Rondeau Provincial Park to look at Phragmites burn sites and to practice and learn about the Field Guide for Predicting Fire Behaviour in Ontario's Tallgrass Prairie (the "yellow book").

Over the two days discussion focused on:

- Habitat management through fire
 1. use of fire to restore and maintain tallgrass prairie and oak savannah habitat, burn frequency, prescriptions and public responses
- Phragmites burning:
 1. pre-burn treatment requirements, fuel arrangement, fuel loading, and seasonal timing (spring, summer, fall and winter burning)
- The Yellow Book:
 1. fuel load, fuel moisture, fire behaviour and prescription setting
- Smoke management – where is that smoke going?
- Endangered Species – the law, best practices and response to fire

Similar to the Yellow Book, DNR staff have been observing that successful burning of invasive Phragmites grass requires a moisture content of less than 20%. This is encouraging news for application of existing science to this new fuel complex.

Ontario's technique of rolling Phragmites to changing the fuel arrangement to extend burning windows while reducing flame length was also discussed. Michigan DNR is now planning to experiment with rolling based on success with this treatment in Ontario.

Additional discussions surrounded timing of prescribed burns. In Ontario there are limitations to burning in the summer because of endangered species concerns; and in Michigan there are limitations to burning in the fall because of hunter concerns. The Michigan staff shared their experience and success stories with winter burning; based on this, Ontario plans to initiate research to determine winter burn prescriptions.

Ontario and Michigan have a great deal in common on how fire is used to eradicate Phragmites and to manage tallgrass habitat, we will have many more experiences with using fire that can be shared.

Phragmites Burning in Ontario
Ontario MNR and Michigan DNR Knowledge Exchange Tour
July 17, 18 & 19, 2012

Location: Southwestern Ontario, Canada

Purpose: a cross agency exchange of knowledge on burning in grasslands

Both the Ontario MNR and Michigan DNR use fire to eradicate Phragmites and manage Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannah. There are different approaches to the use of fire and the sharing of knowledge and expertise can benefit both agencies.

Participants:

- Michigan DNR,
- Lakes State Fire Science Consortium
- University of Toronto
- Ontario MNR

Participants will meet up in Windsor, Ontario and tour the Ojibway Prairie sites and the next day visit Rondeau Provincial Park and tour the Phragmites burn sites.

Topics:

- Phragmites burning – pre-burn treatment requirements, fuel arrangement and fuel loading, and seasonal timing
- Use of the Field Guide for Predicting Fire Behaviour in Ontario’s Tallgrass Prairie (The Yellow Book) – fuel load, fuel moisture, fire behaviour and how to set a prescriptions
- Smoke management – where is that smoke going?
- Endangered Species – the law, best practices and response to fire

Itinerary:

1. **July 17** - meet at 13:00 at Ojibway Nature Centre, 5200 Matchette Road, Windsor, Ontario <http://www.ojibway.ca/index.htm>
2. Meet and greet -- tour the Ojibway Tallgrass Prairie sites
3. To Chatham, Ontario and overnight at Holiday Inn 575 Richmond Street, Chatham, 519-351-1100
<http://www.holidayinn.com/hotels/us/en/hd/canada/ontario/chatham-hotels>
4. **July 18** - meet at Rondeau Provincial Park visitor centre
www.ontarioparks.com/english/rond.html
5. Presentation on burning and natural history of Rondeau, tour phragmites burn sites, practice using The Yellow Book.
6. Return to Chatham – overnight Holiday Inn
7. **July 19** - depart for home

Each group or individual is responsible for their own transportation, accommodations and meals while traveling. Group meals and bush lunches to be arranged.

June 7, 2012

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