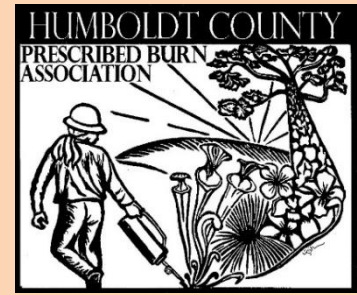


# Fog and Fire

The Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association's Seasonal Newsletter



Students from the Cal Poly Humboldt Student Association for Fire Ecology (S.A.F.E) help with holding and firing on a ridge above the Bear River Valley

## IN THIS ISSUE

### **Local Updates and Opportunities**

Permit updates, and some out-of-area opportunities.

### **Following fall burns with winter training**

After 4 burns, and lots of rain, the HumCo PBA focuses on training.

### **Southern Humboldt's First Cultural Burn in 150 years**

Wailaki Cultural Fire Practitioners bring fire back to ancestral lands.

### **Are you ready for 'Juneuary'?**

Here's how to take advantage of Humboldt's best kept good-fire secret.

### **PBA Coordinator Contacts**

Who they are and how to reach them.

### **California pulls the cord on small engines in 2024**

Ins and outs of the new regulations on small engines.

## Local Updates and Opportunities

### **CAL FIRE – HUU declares wildfire season over.**

As of Nov 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, CAL FIRE HUU has declared that fuel conditions are no longer conducive to wildfire! This means CAL FIRE burn permits (LE-62A, LE-5, LE-7/8) are no longer required within the Humboldt-Del Norte Unit. Air Quality burn permits and/or smoke management plans are still required for all open burning in Humboldt, Del Norte and Trinity Counties.

For information on North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District's permit requirements visit their burn program website: [NCUAQMD Burn Program \(ncuaqmd.org\)](http://ncuaqmd.org)

### **New Release – The Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Manual**

This booklet is designed to help landowners navigate the many facets of planning, permitting and implementing prescribed fire. It can serve as a field handbook as well as an online resource for conducting safe and effective burning. Download here: [Humboldt County Rx Burn Manual](#)

### **Fish and Fire Workshop with Lenya Quinn-Davidson – March 27<sup>th</sup> in Santa Rosa, CA**

As part of the 41<sup>st</sup> Salmonid Restoration Federation Conference, local fish and fire experts Lenya Quinn-Davidson, Josh Smith, and Will Harling will be hosting an all-day Fish and Fire Workshop. The goal of this workshop is to bridge the gaps in understanding between fisheries and fire professionals and discuss management options that can connect uplands to aquatic systems in a beneficial way.

For more information visit: [Forwarding the Fish & Fire Conversation: Where Do We Go From Here? | Salmonid Restoration Federation \(calsalmon.org\)](#)

### **Women's TREX Nebraska 2024 – Niobrara Preserve**

WTREX explores the growing role of women in fire management. Participants conduct prescribed fire operations designed to advance their formal fire qualifications. Participants are also expected to engage in workshops and dialogue on fire ecology, improve communication skills, learn about prescribed fire policy and planning, and improve their personal toolset for empowering a more diverse and thoughtful fire workforce. Deadline to apply is January 19<sup>th</sup> 2024.

More information and application form can be found at [Women-in-Fire Prescribed Fire Training Exchange \(WTREX\) - Fire Networks](#)

## Following Fall Burns with Winter Training

The best laid burn plans often get rained out. Unfortunately, that's exactly what happened in our region this year. The rain started in late September and returned every few days for the entire fall season. By some back of the napkin math, coastal Humboldt only got ~15 good broadcast burn days between mid-September and December (And that's only considering weather and fuels; not resource availability, poor air quality days, and other factors.) Great for our rivers, not great for good fire!

That said, PBA Members and Landowners were able to take advantage of a few slim windows of sunny weather to accomplish some broadcast burning this fall. During these burns we reduced brush encroachment and improved 130 acres of rangeland in Bear River, we reinforced the Garberville fuel break with a 5-acre forest burn, and we reinforced the Yokohama fuel break outside of Leggett with a 35-acre forest understory burn.

Once forests became far too wet to burn, the PBA turned its attention to training. This fall we offered 4 important trainings for over 90 firefighters and practitioners. We started our training schedule with a 'Fire-Lighter Training'; where PBA members learn and practice prescribed fire skills in an informal setting. Then, with funding from a CCI grant from CAL FIRE, and partnerships with Humboldt County Fire Instructors Association and Briceland VFD, we hosted S-131 Squad Boss, S-211 Portable Pumps, and S-290 Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior. All of which are essential trainings for both firefighters and prescribed fire practitioners.

A big thanks to Lead Instructors Aurora Studebaker and Dave Soldavini, and all the assistant instructors and proctors.



Father and Son discuss fire behavior in blackberries



Flames eat up small fir trees during a winter oak woodland burn

## Are you ready for 'Juneuary'?

One of Humboldt Counties best kept secrets is our mid-winter fire weather window. Barring the winter of 2022-23, the North Coast often experiences a sustained dry spell sometime between late January through early March, fondly referred to as 'Juneuary'. Sunny days with daytime temperatures from 40-70f and relative humidities from 20-40% for 5 or more days will bring oak woodlands, shrublands, and slash on south and southwest facing slopes into the right fuel moistures for burning (*Pro Tip: Google "MesoWest" for interactive live weather in your neighborhood.*)

There are a few key benefits to burning during this time of year. First and foremost, CAL FIRE does not require permits. You'll just need a Non-Standard Burn Permit and Smoke Management Plan from NCUAQMD. This allows landowners the freedom to burn on short notice and decide their own fireline, engine, crew, and resource requirements.

In addition to less red tape, winter provides less fire control concerns. During these short dry windows, closed canopy forest will remain soaking wet, and grazed grasslands will be too green to carry fire. These conditions allow burners to use changes in vegetation type or changes in slope as holding features. For the landowners, this means little to no holding resources required, little to no ground disturbance to create control lines, and the freedom to lead your own burn with little worry.

Not only are burns easier to plan and implement in winter, but they can be very effective at killing small, unwanted woody vegetation. In winter, shrubs and conifers are dormant and not transporting water or sugars through their stems and leaves. This means that, despite wet soil, live woody plants are at their lowest moisture levels for the year, making them easier to kill with low intensity fire.

### 'Juneuary' Burning Checklist

- ✓ Oak woodland, shrubland, or exposed slash on a south or southwest facing slope.
- ✓ Valid Non-Standard Burn Permit and Smoke Management Plan from NCUAQMD.
- ✓ A simple prescribed fire plan.
- ✓ Drip or propane torches and fuel.
- ✓ A few sure-footed friends and a PBA coordinator! (optional)

Meet your PBA Coordinators:



**Kai Ostrow**  
**Southern Humboldt PBA Liaison**  
 Based out of Briceland  
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 Phone: 707-923-7777



**Henri Holbrook**  
**HumCo PBA Coordinator**  
 Based out of Eureka  
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## Cultural Fire Returns to Southern Humboldt

A small smoke column on a cool October day marked a historic moment for fire management in Southern Humboldt. The first indigenous-led burn in 150 years worked to restore a historic oak grove in Southern Humboldt Community Park to its former health. Members of Native Health in Native Hands and the Wailaki Cultural Fire Crew, with some support from the Southern Humboldt PBA, Briceland VFD, Garberville VFD and the local community, gathered under the leadership of Diana Totten to burn piles and reduce fuels in preparation for a future fall burn.

The spirit of cooperation and a feeling of reverence for Wailaki Ancestral Lands radiated throughout all the participants. Laughter blew back and forth across the four-acre unit between the groups tending to burn piles and others tending to culturally significant plants. This was the beginning of an important healing process for both the land and the burners.

Cultural Fire Practitioner and Burn Boss Diana Totten, considering the health of both the land and community, ensured the piles burned quickly and cleanly to avoid laying smoke across the valley, then returned over the following days to mix the fresh ash into the soil.



*Leaf blowers are often used to increase fire behavior during cool winter burn windows*

## California pulls the cord on small engines

As part of a recent executive order and assembly bill, California is moving towards a future with lower emissions, and that means doing away with internal combustion by 2035. The first engines on the chopping block are small off-road gas-powered engines (SORE's). SORE's have idled under-the-radar as pollution regulations have tightened around passenger vehicles, tractors, and other large engines, meaning SORE's now contribute a large proportion of California's air pollution.

Starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, California will ban the sale of newly built SORE's smaller than 25 HP (375cc). This means that most lawn and garden equipment, chainsaws, generators, and small recreational vehicles won't be available in CA stores once current supplies sell out.

However, there are a few sputters of hope. The law states that regulations will be put into effect on 1/1/24 -or- when the transition is deemed 'feasible' by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), whichever is latest. CARB has not yet released the full rules. Also, federal regulations protect the sale of chainsaws over 35cc and pumps over 40cc, so we'll still find the newest large chainsaws and pumps in CA stores.

Only time will tell if yardwork will go all-electric on January 1<sup>st</sup>, but if you've been thinking about buying a new weed-eater there's no better time than now!



*Native Health in Native Hands Crewmember burns moss off of oak trunks to make for a safer cultural burn next fall*