



Prescribed Fire

Wisconsin Volunteer Training Requirements

The Nature Conservancy supports the safe and ecologically appropriate use of fire to restore native habitats and maintain biodiversity. We partner with organizations such as but not limited to; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service, other land protection non-profits, and local fire departments and highway departments to conduct prescribed fire. Many Wisconsin trees and plants are fire-dependent and need fire every 3 to 25 years to thrive. [Learn more](#) about the benefits that fire provides to people and nature.

Volunteers that have completed and remain current in Basic Wildland Firefighter Training are invited to support staff during prescribed fire operations. These activities can include lighting sections of the fire (ignition), helping to contain the fire along control lines (holding), extinguishing remaining hotspots (mop up), and monitoring or patrolling the burn area. On their first burn, volunteers will work under the direction of experienced staff.

To participate as a prescribed fire volunteer, you must complete Basic Wildland Firefighter Training. This takes approximately 40 hours to complete and may require out-of-pocket expenses for courses offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).

How to Become a Prescribed Fire Volunteer

1. Submit your [volunteer interest form](#). Select **prescribed fire** as an interest.
2. TNC staff will email you to sign volunteer agreement and wildland firefighter attachment.
3. TNC staff will TNC staff will contact you to request PDF copies of any certifications you currently have and can assist you with any additional requirements needed to participate.
4. You will be added to our contact list and receive email notifications about prescribed fire volunteer opportunities.

Training Requirements

To participate in prescribed fire activities, volunteers must complete specific training courses by FEMA and NWCG to meet The Nature Conservancy's standards. For a step-by-step guide to completing the online courses, please refer to the [Wildland Firefighter Online Training guide](#).

	Instructor	Delivery Method	Approximate Time
ICS-100: Introduction to ICS	FEMA	Virtual or in person	2 hours
IS-700: NIMS, An Introduction	FEMA	Virtual or in person	3.5 hours
L-180: Human Factors in the Wildland Fire Service	NWCG	Virtual or in person	4 hours
S-190: Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior	NWCG	Virtual or in person	6-8 hours
S-130: Firefighter Training	NWCG	Virtual or in person	22 hours
S-130: Firefighting Training in Person Component	NWCG	In person	Approximately 8 hours (field day)
Work Capacity Test	TNC	In person	1 hour

Maintaining Prescribed Fire Certifications

After completing the Basic Wildland Firefighter Training, volunteers are responsible for maintaining their certification annually by completing a refresher course (RT-130), passing the annual Work Capacity Test (at a moderate level or higher), and participating in at least one prescribed fire every five years. The Nature Conservancy facilitates these courses at no cost at the UW-Madison Arboretum in October to help volunteers maintain their qualifications required for prescribed fire.

Physical Requirements and Field Conditions

Prescribed fire activities can be physically demanding. Volunteers must be able to pass at least the Moderate level of the Work Capacity Test, which involves hiking 2-miles with a 25-pound pack in 30 minutes. This ensures participants are prepared for the conditions typically encountered in the field. Field conditions can also be challenging and are typically hot, smoky environments with uneven terrain.

FAQ's

When do prescribed fires occur? When prescribed fires occur varies by location. In Wisconsin, site conditions are typically favorable for burning during spring (between March and May) and fall (between September and November). We refer to these opportunities as “burn windows”.

How can I sign up to participate? When conditions look favorable for a prescribed fire, we'll send a survey to our contact list (typically about one week in advance). Volunteers can sign up to participate by submitting their availability through this survey.

Prescribed fires are contingent on weather conditions and wind direction. As a result, we confirm where and when we will be burning the night before. We email the timing and location, maps of the prescribed fire area, the night before a prescribed fire (typically between 3:00 - 7:00pm).

What is the time commitment for participating? Prescribed fires typically last eight hours and occur between 9:30am and dusk. Volunteers must commit the entire shift.

What supplies will TNC provide? For prescribed burns, TNC will provide Nomex coveralls, hard hat, fire shelter, radio, and radio harness.

What equipment will I need? You will need to bring a few things for your personal protective equipment including a pair of leather gloves, eye protection, and boots. Boots must be at least 8 inches high, exterior made of leather, a melt-resistant lug sole, and a soft toe. All participants must wear natural fibers (not synthetic fabric) like wool and cotton, underneath your Nomex.

What else should I bring? Be sure to bring lunch, water, and electrolytes. It is good to bring a smaller bottle that you can keep on your person, but you will also want to bring a larger bottle you can use to refill. We recommend bringing a small backpack to carry your lunch and water bottle.



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