

Prescribed fire on CA's private lands: Myths, realities, and opportunities

Lenya Quinn-Davidson, Area Fire Advisor
Humboldt/Trinity/Mendocino/Siskiyou counties



Today's presentation

- Options for private lands burning
- Debunking prescribed fire myths
- Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association



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Who's using Rx fire in northern CA?

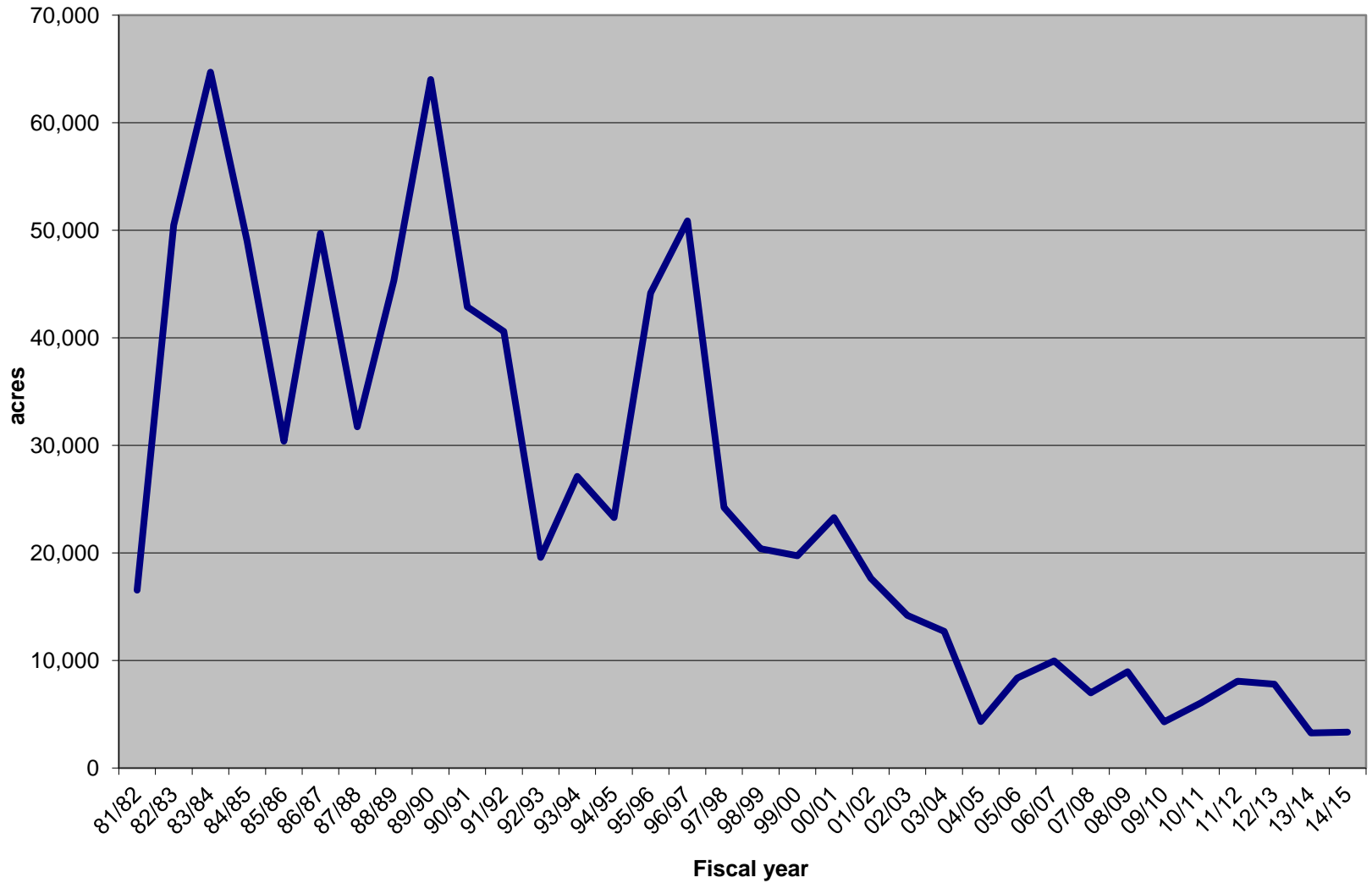
- Total of ~50,000 acres/year in northern CA
- Federal agencies = 91% of burning*
- Very little private lands burning!



**From Quinn-Davidson and Varner 2012*

CAL FIRE VMP acres per year

VMP completed acres



Options for private lands burning



Pros

- Liability covered by CAL FIRE
- Low cost for landowner
- Experienced crews/resources
- Permits/air quality covered

Cons

- Limited agency capacity
- Planning time/environmental compliance
- Not guaranteed

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Options for private lands burning



Contractor

Pros

- Contractor provides insurance
- Landowner can set expectations and timeframes
- Experienced crews/resources
- Permits/air quality covered
- Environmental compliance

Cons

- Cost!!

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Options for private lands burning



Pros

- You're in charge—do it when and how you want
- Low cost
- Environmental compliance

Cons

- Liability
- Manpower/resources
- Permits/air quality

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Options for private lands burning



Pros

- You're in charge—do it when and how you want
- Low cost—volunteer based
- Environmental compliance
- Equipment/labor pooled through PBA
- PBA can apply for grants/funding
- Every burn is a training opportunity


Cons

- Liability (though you can hire a burn boss with insurance)
- Permits/air quality
- Someone has to coordinate

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Option	Cost to landowner	Success rate
VMP	Very little...cost of lunch for crews, equipment time for prep	Limited
Private contractor	\$10-20k per day?	High
Do it yourself	Equipment time/labor	High? (small scale only)
PBA	Equipment time/labor Optional: Burn plan + burn boss (\$1.5-2k)	High



“Reasons” why Rx fire isn’t a viable option in California

- Liability
- Permits
- Population issues/public acceptance
- Topography/fuels
- Etc., etc.



Liability: “It’s just too risky”

- Simple negligence law
- Fire often covered in farm insurance policies
- There are good ways to mitigate liability:
 - hire burn boss
 - include neighbors in project planning
 - start with small, simple units



Permits: “Too much red tape”

- Only **two permits** needed for Rx fire:
 - Year round: air quality permit and smoke management plan (exemptions available for no-burn days)
 - During fire season (typically ~May 1-Oct. 31): CAL FIRE permit required



Population: “Too many people”

- California has more open space and wildlands than many areas where more burning happens (SE)
- Public opinion more limiting for managers in other regions of the US (*Cleaves et al. 2001 vs. Quinn-Davidson & Varner 2012*)
- Public support for Rx fire is high. Studies consistently show >80-90% approval rates across the country (*McCaffrey et al. 2015*)



Topography/fuels: “California is too complex—it’s not like Nebraska or Texas”

- Many of the areas that need fire on private lands in California are low complexity—grasslands, woodlands
- Management objectives in CA are similar to other states where they do more burning

Woody encroachment is everywhere





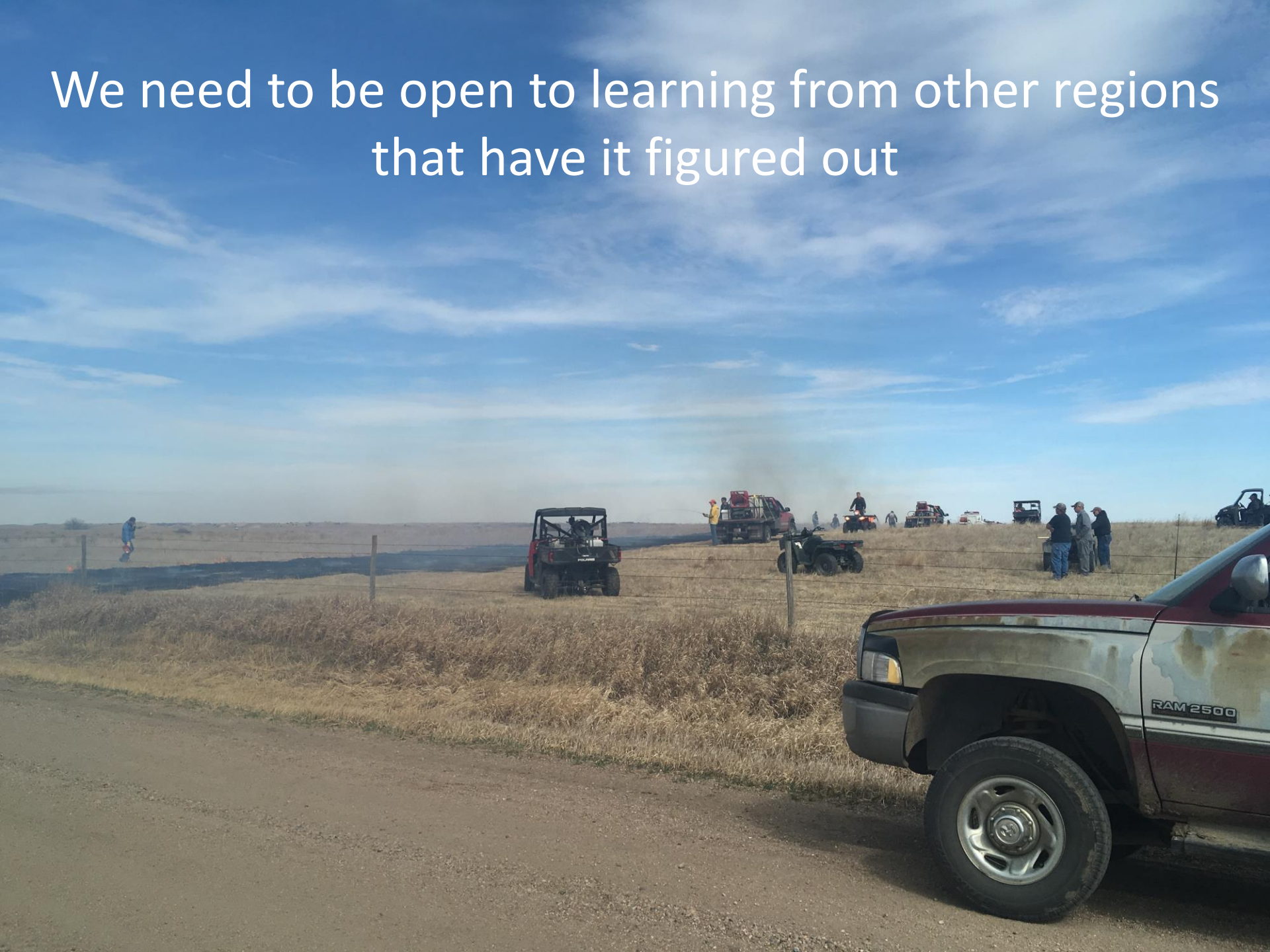
Interested landowners,
fire departments, and
volunteers are
everywhere



Everyone has a role!



We need to be open to learning from other regions
that have it figured out



Bringing the PBA model to CA



Hunt Burn: 6/29/17



- Goals: provide training and reduce invasive grass cover (medusahead)
- 18 acres, 25 volunteers, 2 VFD engines



Mazeppa Burn: 10/31/17



- Goals: provide training and restore coastal rangelands (reduce *Baccharis* cover)
- 140 acres, 23 volunteers, 6 fire departments

VFD support was amazing!

Provided a great training opportunity





Chalk Mt. Burn: 12/14/17



- Goals: provide training and maintain oak woodland restoration area
- 20 acres, 12 volunteers, 1 VFD engine



Burn trailer is here!!

- California Deer Association donated \$24k to kick off Rx burning in Humboldt County with the purchase of a burn trailer and 3 slip-in units.
- Redwood National Park also donated used hand-tools, hose, and other items



Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association

- Hosted first official Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association meeting on March 9
- Board of Directors & by-laws established



Humboldt County Prescribed Burn Association

- Building list of projects and ranking strategy
 - 2200 acres of projects identified
 - Must participate in other burns to get your project on the list
- Burns planned for this spring and fall—join us!

BURN PROJECTS 2018/2019

LANDOWNER	SIZE	FUEL TYPE	SEASON
HUNT	30-40	grass (medusahead)	spring
DWIGHT	140-500	coyote brush	fall
COCKING	3-10	grass/brush/amber litter	fall
Klopper	360	coyote brush	fall
Muller Muller	100	coyote brush	fall
Spansberg	100	prairie	fall/winter/spring
Marshall	31	oak woodland	fall/winter
Tesley	20	oak woodland/ grassland	fall
Phelps	2-3	grasshopper/winged	spring/summer
Lucas	200+	oak woodland/ grassland medusahead	fall/winter/spring

Loke Star	200-500	oak woodland/ grassland/ shrubland	all year
Marrison	150	coyote brush	fall
Chalk Mt	500-600	oak woodland	fall/winter
Leicester	20	prairie (amurhemp)	fall/winter
USPS mtage	60	cattails	winter
COEC	-	oak woodland	spring/winter
Ostrom	5	understory	fall

Questions?

Lenya Quinn-Davidson

lquinn@ucanr.edu

(707) 445-7351

