



DEI fire workshop participants complete a burn at Bennett Spring Savanna. © Kristy Stoyer/TNC

Lighting the Way

TNC training brings in new people and perspectives

On a crisp March morning in the western Ozarks, members of a fire crew pulled on their gear, reviewed their plan once more, and readied their drip torches.

The immediate objective was to burn 75 acres of The Nature Conservancy's Bennett Spring Savanna. The rugged, complex habitat is a window into a time before European settlement, and clearing the underbrush, dry leaves and fallen limbs from the oak trees peppering the hillside creates openings for nature to fill in with native grasses, such as bottlebrush and little bluestem.

"We always approach our work from a 'if you build it, they will come' mentality," explains Ryan Gauger, TNC's prescribed fire and stewardship manager in Missouri.

But there was more going on than a fire. The controlled burn was part of the

first of three TNC diversity, equity and inclusion workshops that took place this spring. Each two-week workshop increases the use of prescribed fire by strengthening the ranks of its practitioners. The crew at the savanna came from as far away as Minnesota, Ohio and even South Africa. Six of the 10 people working the fire were women, including the two squad leaders.

Kelly Martin, burn boss with TNC's North America Fire program, observed it all. With nearly four decades in the male-dominated fire service, she knows adding more perspectives makes crews stronger — and safer. She was encouraged by the new generation coming up. "I now see the sisterhood of wildland firefighters that I did not have when I was their age."



READ our in-depth story on the training at nature.org/mofire



Kylie Paul (left) and Kelly Martin © Doyle Murphy/TNC

Fire Up *It's in Our Nature* for the Hottest Podcast Around

Two trailblazers in the fire world recently crossed paths at a TNC fire workshop in the Ozarks. Kelly Martin, a TNC burn boss and retired Yosemite National Park fire chief, and Kylie Paul, a fearless wildland firefighter from South Africa, paused to join Missouri State Director Adam McLane for a new episode of *It's in Our Nature*.



LISTEN TODAY at nature.org/mopodcast for answers to all your burning questions.



TNC's first controlled burn was conducted in 1962 at Helen Allison Savanna in Minnesota. © The Nature Conservancy

60 Years of Fire

A legacy of putting 'good fire' on the ground

In 1962, The Nature Conservancy embraced one of the world's oldest and most powerful ecological tools — fire. Controlled burns had been used by native populations for a millennium or more to support the land, and the Conservancy adopted the practice for many of the same reasons. As we mark the 60th anniversary of our first burn on a preserve in Minnesota, TNC's fire program has grown to the largest of its kind, covering about 120,000 acres across the U.S. every year. Carefully burned grounds sprout new flowers and shoots, increase biodiversity, and are more resistant to the rise of unnaturally intense wildfires. TNC's first controlled burn in Missouri took place in 1983, and since then we've worked to increase the use of fire on our forest and prairie landscapes across the state.

But TNC does more than manage its own lands; we work with multiple agencies and Indigenous peoples around the world through trainings and shared resources to support safe use of fire, promote good policies and restore a way of life. Here's to another 60 years of putting "good fire" on the ground.



LEARN MORE about TNC's history with fire at nature.org/whyfire

The Doug Ladd Fire and Stewardship Program

TNC's former director of conservation in Missouri spent decades using and advocating for the power of fire to rejuvenate and protect life in forests and grasslands. The fund keeps that important work going. If you're interested in supporting TNC's fire program in Missouri, contact Mona Monteleone at mona.monteleone@tnc.org or call 314-968-1105.



Doug Ladd © The Nature Conservancy

NATURE MISSOURI

A Victory for Prescribed Burning New legislation removes an outdated barrier

The Nature Conservancy has used prescribed fire to rejuvenate lands in Missouri for nearly 40 years, but a gap in state law made it tough for private landowners to do the same. Now, that's changing.

The Prescribed Burning Act sets a negligence standard as it relates to prescribed fire, which helps remove current barriers that individuals and contractors face when obtaining insurance coverage to utilize prescribed burning as a conservation land management tool.



Goodnight-Henry Prairie © Tom Fielden

The change makes it feasible for certified contractors to get insurance, a critical step to encouraging more controlled burns in the state. Missouri was just one of five states without a similar standard.

Backed by TNC, bipartisan support for fixing the problem was overwhelming. The bill passed the Senate in a vote of 31-2 and the House in a 150-1 vote. Missouri Governor Mike Parson signed the bill into law in July 2021.