

Fire Regime & Rangeland Restoration on Ponca Land

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has returned fire to their land. After more than 100 years of fire exclusion on Native American soil in northeast Nebraska, the “Poncas” have resurrected one of their often used 18th and 19th century methods of land and resource management: burning. This time around, however, management objectives will be accomplished by initiating scheduled fire applications under strict prescription parameters, with the goal to enhance rangeland productivity by perpetuating health and vigor to vegetation, and increasing forage quality and availability for their buffalo herd. The herd was established in 1996 and has significant cultural and spiritual value to the Tribe.



Burn Block Ignition

On September 27th, 2005, the first of a series of planned prescribed ignitions was completed on 160 acres of the Ponca Tribe’s buffalo pasture in northeast Nebraska. Prep work and the burn were completed by personnel from the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Yankton Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, Santee Sioux Tribe and the Yankton, Lower Brule and Winnebago Agencies. The treatment was initiated due to concerns on behalf of the Ponca Tribe that valuable native plant species were being lost to exotic species and that their buffalo herd was suffering because of the resulting vegetation change. The treatment was successful with over 80% of the unit burned.



Herd and Buffalo Pasture

Level 3 fire effects monitoring has been implemented by the Ponca Tribe and will be followed up in the months and years to come. Additional entries are currently in the planning phase and will be determined pending the monitoring results.