

Learning How to Burn Your Prairie March 21, 2017

The spring burn season arrived, so Prairie Smoke sponsored a Burn Class this year at Chester Woods park. The evening was cold and damp, but interest was very high, and a standing room only crowd attended. The class was taught by Tom Eckdahl, director of the park, a 1330 acre gem about 7 miles east of Rochester on Hwy 14. Everyone was asked to introduce themselves, and one of the participants turned out to be Olmsted County Commissioner, Greg Wright.

Some excellent handouts were made available to participants. The attendees were given critical information on the many factors and decisions that must be made to set up a prescription burn, including why, when, who must be notified, what permits are necessary, and how to safely conduct a controlled prairie burn.

Most importantly, they also learned how easily mistakes are made, how and why burns can get out of control and what can quickly go wrong when the burn is poorly planned and executed. A great many good questions were asked and thoroughly answered.

And yes, there was indeed a quiz, but it was taken before the class, so participants could begin to understand how much they might not have known about burning and what they thought they knew that wasn't true. The answers to the quiz were then discussed at the end of the class.

Prairie Smoke President Barb Nigon then told the audience about the organization, what we do (and do not do) and informed the participants of the well-researched and thorough information available on the PS website, prairiesmokemn.org.

And of course, last but certainly not least, a variety of delicious cookies were available for munching, baked by Barb especially for the class participants.

Prairie Smoke is very grateful to the Chester Woods staff for this excellent presentation, and we hope to offer such classes on a regular basis from now on. If you're not familiar with this wonderful park, check it out this summer – you'll be amazed at what's available there!

Ruthann Yaeger
Secretary, Prairie Smoke