

## NGA Georgia Prescribed Fire Council June 4, 2020 Webinar Outline of Process and Lessons Learned

### Technical and logistical decisions handled in advance of the meeting

- The planning team had been working six months prior to build a solid agenda. Two months out a sub committee was set up to explore the idea of meeting/no meeting/combination meeting in central Georgia/virtual meeting. It was determined that the benefits to having a virtual meeting (gaining a wider audience, keeping up the momentum from last year) outweighed the drawbacks (losing part of the audience, loss of in-person networking opportunities). The subcommittee continued working together to produce the virtual meeting. Having regular virtual planning meetings and conference calls, a variety of organizations represented (each with their unique strengths), and a clear plan of each person's responsibilities were essential elements.
- We partnered with the National Wildlife Federation to bring in Keith Ward as our Coach and to manage the live event. Having an experienced technician guide us through and ultimately manage the Zoom platform during the webinar made all the difference in terms of building confidence and providing competence. Short of finding a rock star like this, look for opportunities to gain this experience, for example in the form of practice webinars for a staff or committee meeting.
- **Zoom Webinar vs Zoom Meeting**
  - Because the purpose of the event was education and information sharing and because we anticipated that it would attract a large audience we chose the Webinar format which does NOT allow the audience to be on camera. Therefore this event was more like a lecture than an interactive meeting. While this can be less engaging, it is more feasible with a large number of people.
  - Zoom Webinar allows you to identify your panelists (speakers) in advance and send them their own unique panelist link to login. They exclusively have permission to share their screens and use their microphones.
  - We required registration in advance and utilized the Zoom registration portal for this purpose.
  - Zoom allows you to choose which data fields you want to use to collect information from your registrants. We chose to include state and organization.
  - Zoom allows you to use your branding and content to set up your registration page.
  - Zoom sends each registrant their own unique link to login which cannot be shared. (This is a security feature to combat "Zoom Bombing" where uninvited people hack in and hijack the meeting in inappropriate ways.) The unshareable unique link should be explained explicitly during registration. Each person that wants to watch the webinar should register individually. Also explain that the unique link appears to be attached to whatever device you register on. For example, if you register on your phone but then try to join the meeting on your computer you may run into issues. This happened to several of our participants and they had to register again the day of the event to get in.
  - Zoom can send a reminder to every registrant in advance of the webinar. Highly recommended!
  - Zoom compiles a report after the webinar that shows who actually attended and how long they stayed online. This data can be queried by category (i.e. state, organization, etc.),
  - You don't have to use Zoom's registration process but it is highly recommended because of its ease of use and info reported on attendees. We had a steady 275 participants from 28 different states. 115 people registered but did not join. 36 people were on for less than 25 minutes.
- **Practice with all Panelists/Speakers a week prior to the Webinar**
  - All panelists joined the Moderator #1 Frank Riley and Co-host Keith Ward (NWF) and Host Gina Rogers (GWF) one week prior to the event to practice. It's a good idea to have two hosts as a contingency plan for unforeseen problems.
  - Each panelist practiced sharing their screen and using their microphone.
  - Moderator #1 practiced welcome and introduction of panelists
  - They were given feedback on their sound quality and the lighting at their work station. Simple changes in lighting and camera orientation can really improve the audience's experience.

During the webinar, the GPFC banner was hanging behind Moderator #1 and added a nice touch.

- Bogus questions were typed in for Moderator #2 Shan Cammack to practice managing the Q&A feature. This was helpful to see what happens with answering live, typing an answer that everyone can see, and typing an answer that is private. The questions disappear from the Q&A thread box and get filed into different folders.
  - These sessions were important to get everyone comfortable with the technology, allow them to see what to expect, and to make sure that everyone was on the same page.
  - Remind speakers of their audience and encourage them to explain acronyms.
- The meeting was advertised far and wide by GPFC steering committee members. This was important in casting a wide net for the audience. Social media is an important avenue for disseminating info on virtual meetings. Combined efforts may have reached an estimated 100,000 people.

### **Technical Decisions that were utilized during the live event**

- Audience Participation
  - Audience could NOT use their microphones or cameras or share their screens. This kept the meeting secure and avoided inappropriate content from entering the Webinar.
  - Audience could NOT use the chat room. We chose to disable this feature in order to avoid disruptions and distractions. This was a very good idea for an audience of this size.
  - Audience COULD use the Q&A feature to submit questions
  - Audience could NOT submit questions anonymously. This allowed panelists to follow up with them after the event if necessary. Having your name attached also deterred inappropriate questions.
- Questions were vetted and collated by Moderator #2
  - Only questions chosen to be answered live were seen by the audience. It is helpful to have someone very knowledgeable on the subject and the agenda to handle the questions. Questions can sometimes be rolled together or pitched to a different speaker.
  - When time was short, Moderator #2 prioritized which questions would be most informative to the audience. Moderator #2 also had the opportunity to tie things together, emphasize points made, and interject fun PSAs.
  - Make sure the panelists understand that Moderator #2 should handle all questions. When a panelist answered a question, the question disappeared into the answered folder and created confusion for Moderator #2. There were a number of repeated general questions (i.e. am I logged in, what is the email for CFE credits, will the presentations be available after the webinar). These could be handled by privately answering people directly or by prompting Moderator #1 to make an announcement to the whole group.
  - CFE and Master Timber Harvester credits should have been advertised early and more explicitly explained during registration. It would also be helpful to have a slide shown during the webinar with how to secure CFE credits and what info is required.
  - One lesson learned is that Moderator #2 should have explicitly stated at the end of each presentation that now is the time for questions. Several questions filtered in throughout the talk in the Q&A box that were collated and prioritized by Moderator #2. The agenda had a set amount of time for each speaker. Whatever time they had left at the end was given to questions. For this reason, some of the Q&A's seemed rushed.
  - We will consider having a set time for the presentation and a set time for questions. In case no questions are generated by the audience it would be good to have plants in the audience to ask questions and/or pre-prepared questions for Moderator #2 to fill the void.
- Panelist/Moderator Participation
  - Panelists COULD chat with each other, the moderators, and the hosts using the Chat feature.
  - Whenever the Moderator or a panelist was speaking we used the "Spotlight" feature to bring their Video Panel to the forefront. During Spotlight sessions no other panelist could be seen or heard.

- Panelists were asked to NOT share external video segments in their presentations. Not all audience members have high speed internet and showing videos can bog down the signal.
- During the Q&A sessions at the end of each presentation the Spotlight was turned off. At this point if any panelist spoke their Video Panel would come to the forefront. The Moderator #2 and the featured panelist would toggle back and forth as questions were asked and then answered.
- **Other Zoom options utilized**
  - The panelists, hosts, and moderators were in “practice mode” prior to the start of the event. This allowed everyone to get their cameras and microphones working and to test sound before we “Broadcast Live.”
  - The event was recorded. We paused the recording during the one hour lunch break. All speakers have agreed to us sharing the recording on the GPFC website. We will also post video on ATV/UTV safety that had been part of the original agenda.
  - The transcript of the Q&A session was saved and exported as an Excel Spreadsheet. Unanswered questions were emailed along with contact information of audience member to the appropriate panelists for follow up.
  - One of the hosts served as time keeper and unmuted himself to announce the “two minute warnings”. He also gently reminded panelists if they forgot to start sharing their screen. It was a soothing bass voice (some described as batman) who was like a wizard behind the curtain, heard but not seen.
  - A photo slide show of fire pictures and fire adapted plants was shared along with a Spotify playlist of music during the lunch break. This was a good visual to know that the break was still happening. A longer pause on each slide is appropriate. Perhaps 15-20 seconds. Our playlist was instrumental folk music with a few instrumental fire songs sprinkled in.
  - The list of sponsors was shown during the morning break by one of the hosts through “Share Screen.” We should have done more to highlight our sponsors. Perhaps a little slide show during lunch quickly describing each one would have been appropriate.

### **Glitches and unforeseen problems**

- The Fire Council Website crashed two days prior to event! There was no way to anticipate this.
  - Interested parties could no longer find link to register or to download necessary documents.
  - Georgia Wildlife Federation quickly created a webpage on their website with link and documents and the Council sent out an email blast to all members with this new information. The site also allowed attendees to download the agenda and bios and the General Technical Report (Orange Book). It was extremely fortunate and clutch to have a partner with this expertise and capacity.
- Presenters should avoid using live web streaming or have a solid backup. One of the speakers was relying on the GFC website to do a live stream example of v-smoke. Because of their website crash he had to come up with a Plan B on short notice. Encourage speakers to not rely on the web for their presentations. Experience has shown that screen shots of a live demonstration can be almost as effective and are way more reliable.
- Moderator #1 did not wait 10 seconds after broadcast went live before starting to speak. A portion of his opening remarks were not heard by the audience. There were other minor sound problems reported with Moderator #1 and one of the speakers but we did not identify the cause of this
- It would have been nice to show email or website addresses on the screen during certain presentations (i.e. Frank’s info @RC&D for CFE credits, Berry College Longleaf website).
- A panelist had to cancel at the last minute and there wasn’t time to replace him. In the future we plan to have a back up speaker in our pocket that participates in the practice sessions and is willing to pinch hit if a speaker drops out.
- We failed to set up a real time survey/evaluation that could have polled the audience and produced real time results. We do plan on sending out a survey/evaluation via email. However, having one ready during the event would be more effective, more engaging, and would likely encourage higher participation.