

The recent wildfires in California are only the latest example of the devastation that can occur in both urban and rural settings. As wildfires erupt and become an ever more persistent threat, forest stand management must be a consideration for every Kansas landscape. A changing climate has only accelerated the problems that arise in unmanaged ecosystems.

Historically, prairie ecosystems burned from “river to river”. With settlement, prescribed burning was used as a tool to clear underbrush, manage invasive plants and reduce the threat of wildfire. Urbanization encroaches more on native areas this management tool becomes more dangerous and is a less attractive option.

Oftentimes, as communities expand, land managers become less willing to burn more native areas on the fringes of those settlements. Communities must be cognizant of their wildfire risk as development occurs. And as families move out of city centers, they are looking at communities that value natural spaces without understanding the risk that those areas may pose.

For your Oral Presentation you will become an advisory committee working with a new developer who has purchased land on the north side of Manhattan, KS. The property encompasses the Flint Hills landscape with hills covered in native grasses and stands of Eastern Red Cedar and forest stands mainly along the waterways and steep draws. It lies adjacent to privately owned rangeland as well as Corps of Engineers land around Tuttle Creek Reservoir. You will advise the developer on how to manage the grass and forest stands to mitigate the risk of wildfire as well as retain the desired vistas and wildlife habitats that potential buyers desire.

Information from websites such as the Wildfire/National Risk Index, Flint Hills Smoke Management Plan, Firewise USA and any others can be used to develop your presentation and power points.