

Nachusa Grasslands Stewards' 2020-2021 Workday Tips

Signing Up to Lead Workdays:

- Both Saturday and Thursday workdays will take place this year. Thursday leaders can specify their start and stop times when they sign up.
- COVID-19 safety protocols have been established and must be followed by all workday leaders and volunteers. See “COVID-19 Workday Safety Protocols 2020-05-27” for details.
- Volunteer via SignUpGenius: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080945afa82baafb6-nachusa3>.
- You can also click the Workday Steward Signup box on the Friends of Nachusa Grasslands website home page (<https://www.nachusagrasslands.org>) to access the SignUpGenius form.
- When you sign up, be sure to list your unit name and tentative activities (for example, seed collection/processing/planting, weed management, and/or brush clearing).
- You can also volunteer to lead a workday at the new 1420 Naylor property (or some other unit) if there aren't enough tasks in your own unit to keep a workday group busy. You would be assigned a list of tasks and a specific area in which to work.
- On the Sunday before your assigned workday, you will receive an email reminder from info@signupgenius.com with “Nachusa Grasslands” as the sender asking you to reply with your workday plans by **noon on Tuesday**. If we don't hear from you by the deadline, we will use the basic information you entered when you signed up.
- You can describe your plans in more detail in your emailed response and include relevant photos if you wish.
- To control the number of participants and help leaders plan equipment and tasks, volunteers will be required to sign up in advance 24 hours before your workday begins.

In Preparation for Your Workday:

- Check the workday SignUpGenius form for the number of participants expected (<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080945afa82baafb6-may2020>).
- If possible, scout your target work area for appropriate tasks in advance – seeds ready to collect, prevalent weeds or shrubs, areas to focus on or avoid (for example, poison ivy patches or large mammal holes).
- For brush clearing/burning workdays, chainsaw felling and trimming of trees beforehand is recommended (see Safety Briefing Checklist below).
- Review the workday preparation bullet points on the bulletin board at the bottom of the HQ Barn steps and gather all necessary equipment.
- Bring a few bottled waters in case someone forgets to bring their own, or didn't bring enough.
- Load vehicles with supplies, making sure that all backpacks and pesticides are secured with straps to avoid spillage.

Before You Begin Your Workday:

- **Introductions:** Gather the group just prior to 9:00 am, maintaining 6-foot social distancing. Invite the group to do introductions including their name and hometown. You might ask the group if they have particular questions or what they want to get out of their experience for the day.

- **Your Plans:** Share an overview of the work planned for the day and what you as a steward are hoping to accomplish as part of your restoration effort. First-time visitors are always appreciative and well-served when they understand the purpose of Nachusa and how their efforts fit with yours. Your energy and enthusiasm will set the tone for the day.
- **Prairie Primer Booklets:** Offer the brown *Prairie Primers* in the holder by the barn steps to everyone, especially new volunteers. Tell them to pick it up after the workday ends.
- **Safety Briefing:** Please review this list of safety procedures for all workdays and go over the protocols with the group before leaving the Barn.
 - Stewards may exclude anyone who is not suitably dressed or equipped for conditions. Tactfully explain that safety must take precedence over participation.
 - For winter workdays or work in wooded areas, long pants and adequate cold weather gear are required.
- During the workday, keep an eye out for potential stewards – people who express an interest in becoming more involved at Nachusa and/or volunteer regularly. Report recommendations to Bill for his follow up.
- Also take photos to share on social media, being sensitive to folks who don't want their pictures taken. Send them to Mary Meier (mbub77@gmail.com) by the Monday after the workday along with a brief description of your activities.

End of Your Workday

- Thank all for a great day.
- Remind folks to pick up their *Prairie Primer* booklets.
- Sign extra credit forms for students if they ask you to.
- Volunteers sometimes inquire about purchasing Nachusa t-shirts. They are for sale in the barn loft – we have set up a self-serve honor system. Because Friends of Nachusa Grasslands doesn't make a profit on the shirts, we can sell them year-round.
- If you have time and people are interested, a hike or a bison tour is always welcome.
- Be sure to have vehicles back to the barn by 1:00 pm and swept out if appropriate, so stewards who have work planned for the afternoon have vehicles.
- **Put all equipment away and clean your chainsaws if you used one.**

Nachusa Safety Briefing Checklist

- Walking hazards:** Nachusa's terrain is uneven. Pay attention to where you are walking, as there are often depressions, animal holes, branches, briars, or other hazards along the way. When walking through the woods, be sure that branches and brambles do not snap back and hit the person behind you.
- Bison precautions:** Unless accompanied by a trained volunteer or staff member, no one can enter the bison unit on foot or drive into the bison unit. When a bison's tail begins to raise, it is stressed and agitated, so do everything possible to keep yourself and the group calm in the presence of the bison. Never walk towards an animal. Stay 100 feet away from the bison at all times, even when separated by a fence. If the herd or a solo animal approaches you, walk perpendicular to their path to get out of the way. You can also wait in a truck until the animals pass by.

Appropriate Protective Clothing and Gear:

- Eyewear:** For all work in wooded areas, eyewear is required. If you do not have eyewear, safety glasses will be provided to you.
- Work gloves:** For all work requiring the use of hand cutting tools (loppers, snips, scissors, bow saws, etc.) work gloves are required. Work gloves are required for all tasks during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Footwear:** Boots or sturdy shoes are recommended. All shoes must be closed-toed, so flip flops or sandals are not permitted.

Transportation Vehicles:

- All volunteers must sit inside a truck or in a truck bed or bench when riding.
- No passengers should ever sit on truck rails or stand when a vehicle is moving.
- Passengers in the truck bed should be warned to keep their hands out of the gap between the cab and the bed
- Drivers should ask passengers in the truck bed to bang on the roof if they want him/her to slow down or stop.
- Drivers should double check to make sure all passengers are seated before moving.
- Drivers should always double check for obstacles and people and **sound the horn** before backing up.
- If backing is obstructed or around people, a person outside the vehicle should guide the driver.

Use of Power Tools and Vehicles:

- Chainsaws:** Only sawyers trained and certified at Nachusa may operate chainsaws.
- Felling trees:** No felling trees within 300 feet of any other people.
- Trimming trees:** Maintain a minimum 50 feet from any other person when using a chainsaw to cut up trees.
- Tracked vehicles:** All tracked vehicle operators must be experienced and approved by Nachusa staff. Do not operate a Terex or Bobcat within 500 feet of any other people.
- Tractors:** All tractor operators must be experienced and approved by Nachusa staff.
- Clearing saws:** Only trained operators may use clearing saws. Appropriate safety gear should be worn while using the equipment. Maintain a minimum 50 feet from any other person when using one.

Use of Herbicides:

- Herbicides should be applied according to methods prescribed by Nachusa staff. See instructions posted by the sink in the barn garage and at https://www.nachusagrasslands.org/uploads/5/8/4/6/58466593/which_herbicide_to_use_f_or_various_weeds_by_bill_kleiman_2018-06.pdf.
- All users of herbicides should wear work gloves and/or latex gloves.
- All volunteers should call attention in the event of spills and carefully avoid direct contact with herbicides. Thorough washing of hands is recommended after working with herbicides.

Burn Piles:

- All brush pile burning must be in approved in advance by Bill or Cody and be based on safe fire conditions.
- Stewards are responsible for safely lighting and maintaining brush piles.
- Make sure that volunteers do not get too close or downwind of a fire.
- Bring along at least one steel rake and flapper when burning piles.

Other Hazards:

- Heat and work exhaustion:** Encourage all volunteers to pace themselves and take it easy. Take breaks and encourage water intake – especially on hot days.
- Insect bites:** Point out the potential for bee stings and ticks in warm seasons. Remind volunteers to check for ticks after the workday.
- First aid:** All trucks should have a first aid kit in them for treating small abrasions.

Emergency Resources:

- Call 911 in case of an emergency.
- Know the 911 address and/or fence gate numbers in your work area so that you can direct emergency responders to the correct location – the address numbers are posted by some unit entrances, and the bison unit maps include the gate numbers.
- An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is located in the HQ Barn breakroom, hanging on the wall to the left of the bathroom entrance
- Bill Kleiman: 815-973-0245 Cody Considine: 815-631-4154**