**Draft MFOA Prescribed Burning Policy Statement 2019  
July 8, 2019**

The Montana Forest Owners Association (MFOA) is a voluntary membership-driven organization that seeks to represent the best interests of Montana’s non-industrial private forest landowners. Among these interests are the right to practice forestry and the ability to develop forest plans and operations that reflect each landowner’s background, interests and desires while maintaining the inherent conservation values of his or her forest.

The use of fire has been and remains an important tool to forest landowners to implement their forest management and conservation plans. MFOA recognizes that the use of fire, just as the use of pesticides, biological agents, and landscape alterations that affect water flow, can physically impact an area much greater than the boundaries of any specific ownership. Even though the rights and abilities of landowners to manage their properties are sacred to Montana’s forest landowners, landowners must give serious consideration to actions that may negatively impact other owners’ properties. A landowner (regardless of private, state, tribal or federal affiliation) should be held morally and financially responsible and liable to fully compensate for and correct forest and property damages that arise outside said landowner’s property boundaries from such owner’s prescribed burns or other actions, irrespective of the intention of such owner. Growing a forest on the relatively harsh landscapes of Montana may take centuries, and forest stewardship is often a multigenerational endeavor that is reflected by an existing forest condition at any particular time. Such a forest condition is not easily replaced and often, when lost, cannot be replaced within the lifespan of an affected landowner. Extreme care must be taken to protect the legacy of work and character that landowners have invested in their properties when forest management policies are developed into state-sanctioned practice and law.