

NECTR 2021 Afterburn Report

Message From The Event Leads

NECTR 2021 was a great success and we had a beautiful event with no major issues. Despite taking time off from burns during the pandemic, everyone fell right back into the flow and the event went smoothly. Most leads remained the same from 2019 and everyone had a good idea of how to run the event.

Weather was unseasonably hot this year, and mud was a minor issue but experience from previous years allowed us to mitigate it.

Weather and conditions for both the effigy and temple burns were optimal and both burns went off very well. Improvements over previous year operations helped to ensure a safe and fun burn for everybody.

For a relatively small event, NECTR has many volunteer shifts to fill. Currently each and every attendee would need to volunteer for at least four hours to fill all the volunteer slots. We still have some issues with volunteer shift no shows, and managing the number of shifts needed to run the event... I think we might need to start with more volunteerism promotion during greeting/acclimation.

NECTR's community has been continuing to grow quickly, however the event has remained the same size for several years for a variety of factors including, volunteerism at the leadership level, pandemic(s), etc. We hope to get some new board members / core leads in the next year who will help revitalize the leadership and potentially grow the event. However, many participants still like the small size.

Covid was a major hurdle the event successfully overcame this year. We implemented a policy where participants were encouraged to be vaccinated, and required to show proof of a negative test within a few days of entering the event. This was well managed by participants, and even though we had some rapid tests on hand to administer if needed, participants often brought their own and contributed them. We ended up with more tests than we started with. To this day I have not heard of any issues with testing/covid outbreaks from the event.

Your friendly neighborhood event lead and board,

Seth

Thomas

Jill

Mindy

Jon

CORE: Art Grants

Core Lead: Sarah F

Overview

Art Grant Core is responsible for running the art grant process and helping artists bring their art to the event.

What Worked

Engaging with artists via text instead of only relying on email resulted in more excitement and much better communication, including casual conversations, frequent updates, photos and interactions.

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

- 1) Continue NECTRs strong tradition of fire art by having a dedicated propane budget that artists can apply for.
- 2) Investigate ways to reach out to lower income participants with targeted grant money.

CORE: Center Camp

Core Lead: Jill W

Overview

Center Camp provides coffee, hot chocolate, tea and relaxation in a 24 hour space for all participants. Center Camp is staffed by two volunteers from 7am to 11pm each day.

What Worked

The on-site trailer NECTR purchased for infrastructure storage was the best! How else does one store thousands of balls? Center Camp had great volunteers, with all of the shifts fully filled, including a cleanup crew, which was awesome! The volunteers kept Center Camp very clean and well maintained throughout the entire burn!

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

The deep cycle batteries used for quiet lighting are aging and were running low earlier than expected. It wasn't a huge issue but we are looking into a more reliable alternative next year.

CORE: DPW

Core Lead: *Matt S*

Overview

Department of Public Works (DPW) handles coordinating work weekends, any trail maintenance, bridge maintenance, etc that needs to be done pre-event or during the event.

What Worked

Preparing the site was relatively smooth this year. Most of the work was completed during work weekend #1.

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

Temple Island Bridge is in need of significant repairs. Also, the road in from greeters needs a significant draining solution. The landowner has offered to dig a drainage ditch with his excavator, which would probably help a lot.

CORE: FAST

Core Lead: *Splinter*

Overview

The Fire Art Safety Team (FAST) is responsible for ensuring that fire is done safely at the event. The team checks for the safety of flame effects, manages burn perimeters, and ensures that any other fires are attended and safe.

What Worked

NECTR had four burns this year, with no issues!

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

This year saw a couple small burns in the Esplanade field. Procedures need to be implemented to ensure the safety of participants around these burns. After one of the burns, hot coals were left unattended and could have led to injury.

Unattended campfires is becoming an issue and should be addressed.

Volunteers for burn perimeters were a little imbalanced - need a better solution for calling for volunteers.

Temple had more than needed, effigy was a little short.

CORE: LNT

Core Lead: Seth

Overview

Leave No Trace: Ensures that we leave the land in the state that we found it (or better).

What Worked

The event was very un-MOOPY.

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

LNT joined late and was unaware of some meetings.

Volunteer shifts could have been arranged differently, with more shifts at the end of the event and a couple more people stay a day late for final clean up.

CORE: Rangers

Core Lead: Jon E

Overview

The Rangers Core is responsible for supporting the other cores and the event leads during the event by passing messages, assisting participants, checking in at volunteer stations to make sure things are running smoothly, and being a resource that others can turn to for help mediating conflicts.

What Worked

Rangers had decent coverage for volunteer shifts. Training sessions went reasonably well and most Rangers were happy with their volunteer shifts

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

Radios didn't arrive until Thursday night due to coordination problems.
Some khakis did not have sufficient training and did not know the proper way to respond to calls.
Rangers needs to inventory equipment and make sure all needs are filled through infrastructure expenses.

CORE: Sanctuary

Core Lead: Diana

Overview

Sanctuary provides a peaceful quiet place for people to work through emotional issues or are having a challenging burn.

What Worked

Sanctuary volunteers demonstrated handling participants needs, escalating when appropriate and ensuring that situations were taken care of quickly, quietly, and with discretion.
There was also some great feedback this year and I'm looking forward to making improvements for Next.

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

It's time to take Sanctuary off of Esplanade and into a quiet corner of the woods. Five years ago, the field was quiet but that's no longer the case. The sound levels are discouraging folks from using the space.
If unable to attend daily event organizer meetings, co-lead will represent.

CORE: GATE/Greeters/Parking

GATE Core Lead: *Gwiddern Tree (Admiral, ret.)*

Parking Core Lead: *Sarina*

Overview

GATE Core is responsible for letting participants in to the event and staffing the GATE shacks overnight in order to be a first point of contact for anyone coming on to the event site.

What Worked

GATE volunteer ethic and tribal knowledge is very strong. We have consistent perennial repeat volunteers at this point that very little micro management is required. This year a number of complicated scenarios were navigated successfully by GATE volunteers without use of radio and related to GATE Lead later in the event.

GATE volunteers handled the additional burden of COVID protocols with the signature grace and humor that we have all come to expect.

Vehicles that got stuck in the mud while parking were rescued pretty quickly by squads that self organized out of nearby participants.

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

Some dedicated traction mats and supplies for rescuing stuck vehicles will be added to the supplies somewhere between GATE and Greeter tent.

Important volunteer slots went unfilled until the last minute in many cases, more so than in the prior two years. As stated earlier in this report some added emphasis on volunteerism is probably warranted. GATE will engage potential volunteers somewhat more aggressively before the event and will attempt to recruit a few people for as-needed emergency GATE shift coverage.

CORE: Ticketing

Core Lead: Jesse

Overview

The ticketing system is one of the first official ways that participants interact with the event. We also use our ticketing system for volunteer sign ups as well.

What Worked

Tickets were sold! Everyone who signed up for the lottery got a ticket offer.

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

The volunteer system did not make it clear when signing up that you weren't registered also for a ticket.

CORE: Trail Lighting

Core Lead: Lauren

Overview

Trail Lighting Core is responsible for installing and removing lights along the trails in sections that aren't lit by theme camps.

What Worked

The LED lighting equipment was lightweight, easy to use, waterproof and functioned very well. Maps and color coded installation made setup very easy. Improving on previous years, volunteer instructions included directions to place the lights in ways that made them easier to take down later (i.e. not in thorny bushes, not on barbed wire fences)

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

It would be smart to have more people for set up and strike. Maybe ask 5 to sign up next year for each shift. Huge preference for the road signs to be installed before trail lights go up. New folks, unfamiliar with the terrain had a hard time finding some of the trails on Thursday.

The existing trail lights work well for this location, but the colors selected for the road signs do not match the current inventory and quantities of lighting. (For example, there were only a few green strands and

the green trail was very long). The product works well for our event and we should invest in more while they are still available.

Next year:

- Light the Temple Island Bridge
- Add morning volunteer shifts back to turn off lights. With the time commitment being so short, the additional shifts could be filled by encouraging participants to sign up for both operations in a day.
- Friday 8am-9am: Turn Off Trail Sign Lights
- Friday 4pm- 5pm: Turn On Trail Sign Lights

CORE: Trail Signs

Core Lead: Amy H

Overview

The Trail Signs core is responsible for designing, building, installing, and uninstalling the signs that mark the trails throughout the NECTR site.

What Worked

The trail name theme and signs were well received this year. Color coding of the trails was also helpful. Lighting the signs with easter egg shell lights worked great!

What Didn't Work / Lessons Learned

The sign design can be improved upon but no real failures. The lighting lasted all weekend and only a few batteries needed to be changed.

Financials

NECTR's primary expenditures include the land reservation, art grants, and event insurance which is consistent across most regional event budgets.