Vary Mowing Patterns to Encourage Native Grasses
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For fire protection, many large fields of grass are either totally mowed every year (often more than once), or the perimeter is mowed in the same place every year leaving the rest of the field to build up a deep layer of dead fuel.

Most native grasses are perennial bunch grasses which won’t produce many, if any seeds after their immature seed heads have been cut off. Therefore, when they are cut (or eaten) off every year, the plant eventually dies out.

But the predominantly annual non-native grasses will regrow at a lower position after being cut off, and produce more seeds for the next year resulting in a field becoming totally non-native annual grasses, which are not the best for grazing nor natural diversity.

A partial solution is to mow fire breaks in a different pattern each year so that some native bunches will be left unmowed and therefore able to produce seeds that year. Then over the next 2-4 following years mow the firebreak in a different pattern so that any one bunch of native grass is given a chance to produce seeds by not having their seed heads cut off.

For example:
Year one— Mow a firebreak around the outer edge of the field.
Year two — mow zig zag across the field north and south.
Year three— mow zig zag east and west.
Year four — mow a five-point star in the field.
Year five — mow a spiral in the field.
Year six — start the sequence of patterns over or invent another design or ten.

Initial mowing can be done early but should leave 3/4 to 2/3 of the field uncut. Later in the season when the native grass has matured its seed (turned brown), a second complete mowing is OK and will not hurt the native grass reproduction, but will help lower the fire danger.

This patterned mowing has been seen to increase the number of wildflowers present. If there are no native grasses in the field to start with, this method will not work unless native grass seed is brought in. Also, if there are perennial non-native grasses present (like Harding Grass or European Fescue), patterned mowing may not be as effective unless they are first removed.