

Cooperators

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Division of Forestry
- Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
- Florida water management districts
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Forest Industry
- Private landowners
- Tall Timbers Research Station
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service
- U.S. Department of Defense
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Florida Association of Insurance Agents
- Florida Fire Chiefs Association

This brochure was produced by the St. Johns River Water Management District to inform the public about the benefits of prescribed fire.

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<http://sjr.state.fl.us>
Printed on recycled paper
Published in March 1999

Prescribed FIRE

A Prescription for a Healthy Florida



A scene from Florida's past

It was sweltering — a day to blister paint. The cicadas buzzed incessantly as the thunderheads piled up like cauliflower in the sky. Florida on a summer afternoon. Suddenly, a lightning bolt sliced through the oppressive air, shattering the bark of a longleaf pine tree. Lightning spiraled down the trunk, leaving a deep gash before exploding into the ground. A feeble fire flickered in the dry grass and pine needles. A cool breeze blew, but no rain came. The breeze fanned the fire, pushing it along. Soon, the fire had burned many acres of the grassy pine woods.

This scene once repeated itself many times each spring and summer in Florida. The plants and animals of the pine woods are accustomed to these frequent fires and depend on fire for their very survival.

Why we burn

Fire is a natural process in many plant communities — sandhills, pine flatwoods, scrub and marsh, to name a few. Without fire, these communities change: the plants and animals unique to the original habitat maintained by fire are lost. Fox squirrels, gopher tortoises, scrub jays, red-cockaded woodpeckers, wiregrass and longleaf pines are just a few of the many species which depend on fire.

The use of prescribed fire (or controlled burning) is necessary for Florida to maintain the variety of plant communities and their associated animal life, to approximate natural conditions and to reduce the chances of damaging wildfire.

Human fear of fire had led us to attempt to control it by suppressing lightning-caused fire as quickly as possible. This, as well as the development and fragmenting of our state's natural areas, has drastically reduced the role of lightning fires in maintaining the diversity of habitats so necessary for our animal life. Periodic prescribed fires are the only means we have to meet the needs of many plants and animals while also reducing the threat of property damage from wildfires.

Many private companies, individual landowners and public agencies manage land where prescribed fires are necessary to improve and protect the natural resources and to reduce the risk of wildfire.

Excuse our smoke

Fire is a natural part of Florida's biological heritage. Periodic fires protect neighboring private property from destructive wildfires, but not without some temporary inconveniences. Smoke and ash travel with the wind and can occasionally find their way to your yard. Great care is taken to minimize this temporary inconvenience. Smoke is a sign that certain lands are being cared for properly. We welcome you to contact one of the cooperators listed on the back of this brochure to make an appointment to come see the results of our fire management program.



Benefits of prescribed fire management

Prescribed fire has many benefits in nature:

- Restoring and maintaining natural communities
- Reducing chances of destructive wildfires
- Perpetuating fire-adapted plants and animals
- Cycling nutrients
- Controlling tree diseases
- Opening scenic vistas



Other facts about prescribed fire

- In 1990, the Florida Legislature passed the Prescribed Fire Act to demonstrate the importance of prescribed fire and to provide liability protection.
- In 1997, Florida's governor and Cabinet designated the second week of March as Prescribed Fire Awareness Week.
- Since 1995, all 33 county commissions in north Florida have passed resolutions supporting the use of prescribed fire.



North Florida Prescribed Fire Council

Prescribed burns are used by such a variety of people that the North Florida Prescribed Fire Council was established in 1989 to promote education and understanding of the issue. This brochure is only one way we hope to better inform you about the benefits of prescribed fire. For more information, call one of the cooperators listed on the back of this brochure.

Our mission

The mission of the North Florida Prescribed Fire Council is to protect the right, to encourage the use of, and to promote public understanding of prescribed fire. The Council encourages the exchange of information, techniques and experiences among practitioners of prescribed fire in north Florida.