

Prescribed burning is an integral part of the longleaf pine ecosystem. A prescribed burning program is an essential maintenance practice for some cost-share programs, where longleaf pine is to established or managed. It is considered to be a maintenance item within the conservation reserve program. Burning longleaf pine stands controls disease, reduces competition, provides for the establishment of native vegetation, and results in wildlife benefits.



Prescribed fire is essential to the establishment of the longleaf pine ecosystem, which includes a whole community of native plants and wildlife. There are many reasons for the use of prescribed fire in longleaf stands. Prescribed fire controls brown spot disease in the young pine trees. The regular application of prescribed fire assists the longleaf to be more competitive by reducing the hardwood brush. The native plant community is restored and diversified with the proper use of prescribed fire. Prescribed fire is necessary to provide the wildlife habitat benefits. Fire stimulates sprouting to provide readily available nutritious and succulent browse for wildlife, opens up brushy areas, and scarifies the seed of native legumes and other plants, which benefit wildlife. Prescribed burning is an indispensable tool used to accomplish many vegetation management goals in longleaf forests.

An initial prescribed burn should be conducted within the first 3 years of planting. The burn should be conducted on at least a 3-year rotation when the trees are still in the grass stage. The initial burn should be conducted during the winter (December – February).

Since many variables play a role in prescribed burning, the burn must be performed under the supervision of a Alabama certified burning prescriptionist. The prescriptionist will be familiar with the proper weather conditions, amount of fuel, fuel moisture and conditions necessary for a proper burn.

On the day that a prescribed burn is conducted, a permit is required from the Alabama Forestry Commission. The AFC will require the following information: Type burn (fuel reduction); Section, Township and Range; number of acres; landowner name; person responsible (person conducting the burn); and a telephone number.

Safety precautions must always be used when conducting a prescribed burn. You must have adequate tools and manpower to conduct the burn. There is potential liability and the loss of human life and property if burning is not conducted properly. Only those trained and experienced in prescribed burning should conduct this practice.

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