



Prescribed Fire Improves Quail and Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat at Enon-Sehoy Plantation

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Located in Alabama's upper coastal plains near Hurtsboro is Enon-Sehoy Plantation, a recreational, quail hunting property renowned for its open-story pine trees and diverse wildlife. This 27,500 acre, privately-owned property contains widely-spaced longleaf, shortleaf, loblolly, and slash pine forests (basal area of 15-60 square feet per

acre) with diverse understory grasses and forbs such as bluestem, switchgrass, and the federally-endangered American chaffseed. The forests and understory vegetation support abundant wildlife, including deer, turkey, and quail, as well as the threatened Bachman's sparrow and the federally-endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Within four years, the property's red-cockaded

woodpecker population grew from just three clusters to 29 potential breeding groups.

Prescribed burning is the primary land management technique used to maintain the open-canopy landscape and diverse wildlife at Enon-Sehoy. Since optimizing quail habitat is the main objective for the property, a careful prescribed fire plan must be used to provide the food, shelter, and breeding grounds necessary for quail survival. This presents a challenge.

Grasses and other understory plants regenerated by prescribed fire provide not only vegetation, seeds, and insects necessary for quail nutrition, but also shelter from predators. Quail habitat is restored by fire, but quail are susceptible to predators without the protective cover of vegetation removed by fire. To achieve both goals of restoration and shelter, the property is burned every two years in a mosaic of 40-50 acre blocks. Burning a patchwork of smaller areas is more time consuming, but enables regeneration of important quail habitat while maintaining sufficient shelter.

Maintaining the Enon-Sehoy landscape with prescribed fire every two years lends added benefits to surrounding communities. Dangerous wildland fire vegetation fuel is kept to a minimum through regular burns, thus protecting surrounding communities from wildland fire hazard. Less understory vegetation also equates to lower smoke production, a primary complaint by the public regarding prescribed fire management.

The plantation placed 18,000 acres in a conservation easement, which provided federal funding to assist in management of this portion of the property. In addition, Enon-Sehoy thins or clear-cuts 10,000 tons of wood per year on average. Forest har-



Photo by John Stivers

Prescribed burning at Enon-Sehoy Plantation in Alabama.

vests create and maintain additional quail habitat as well as generate income to continue management of the property.

In 2016, five new individuals joined as co-owners of 15,800 acres of the Enon-Sehoy Plantation. The new owners support the vision of managing the mature pine savanna landscape with fire and optimizing wildlife habitat. Their support is invaluable for continuing forest management objectives currently underway on the property.

Frequent prescribed fire at Enon-Sehoy has created not only a unique, treasured hunting preserve, but also a diverse habitat containing abundant wildlife and vegetation. 🌲

Editor's Note: This 'Success Story' was written in support of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, representing two national strategic goals: improving wildfire response and promoting resilient landscapes. To learn more, visit www.southernwildfire.net.



Photo by John Stivers

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An example of a widely-spaced, or low basal area, pine forest managed for quail habitat at Enon-Sehoy Plantation, one to two seasons following a prescribed burn.