



SOUTHERN Fire Exchange

Uniting Fire Science and Natural Resource Management



FIRE LINES

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Southeastern Section of the Association for Fire Ecology

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IN THIS ISSUE

Do Liability and Regulatory Standards Influence the Amount of Prescribed Burning in the South?	1
SFE Webinar: El Nino, La Nina and the 1998 Florida Wildfires	1
2015 National Prescribed Fire Use Survey Report	2
Leaving Her Mark: SFE Co-founder and PI Leda Kobziar Heads West	2
Upcoming Events	2
RxCADRE Results Shared in Special IJWF Issue	3
Upland Ecosystem Groundcover Restoration Videos Now Available	3
Southeastern Region Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy Update	3
LANDFIRE Needs Your Help	4
Congratulations John Weir and Cecil Frost	4
Backyards & Beyond Conference Presentations Are Available	4
News and Reminders	4

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Do Liability and Regulatory Standards Influence the Amount of Prescribed Burning in the South?

This is an interesting question given the diversity of standards in legislation and regulations related to certified prescribed burn managers (CPBM) across the region. Two states (Florida and Georgia) use "gross negligence" as the liability standard for loss of control of prescribed fires and civil damages and injuries. "Simple negligence" is the standard in the other southern states. In most states, statutory requirements for liability protection under either standard include a burn permit but are more variable with respect to the presence of a CPBM at the burn, written

prescriptions, adequate personnel and firebreaks, and burn ban exemptions. A fascinating new study reported in *Ecological Applications* (Wonkka, Rogers, and Kreuter, 2015) asked the question at the top of this article, using Florida, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina records for prescribed burns on private lands from 2008 to 2013. By pairing 66 adjacent counties across state lines, the authors were able to evaluate the effects of different liability and regulatory standards on two variables: 1) percentage of privately owned forest, range, and pasture land burned each year and 2) the annual number of prescribed fires on those lands.

In the two states with gross negligence liability, the annual percentage of private acres burned was significantly higher than in adjacent counties with simple negligence standards. These results suggest that the extra liability protection under the gross negligence standard provides an extra incentive for landowners to utilize prescribed burning for land management and resource protection. On average, the additional 3.5% of acres burned in those states is approximately 7,100 acres/county. The number of prescribed burns was also higher in "gross negligence" counties than in "simple negligence" standard counties across state lines. Interestingly, the authors did not find that other requirements (such as having a CPBM on site or written burn prescriptions) in addition to burn permits had any effect on the two main variables. Rather than discouraging landowners from burning, the additional requirements may serve to encourage them through the training and safety awareness that come with those requirements. This study provides new information that could be helpful as states and counties evaluate policies relevant to prescribed burning.

Wonkka, C.L., W.E. Rogers, and U.P. Kreuter. (2015). Legal barriers to effective ecosystem management: exploring linkages between liability, regulations, and prescribed fire. *Ecological Applications* 25(8): 2382–2393.

SFE Webinar: El Nino, La Nina and the 1998 Florida Wildfires Wednesday, February 17, 2016

1:00 - 2:00 PM, Eastern

The current 2015-2016 El Niño event has many Florida fire managers thinking of their experiences from 1998. During the epic 1998 Florida wildfire season, more than 500,000 acres burned resulting in damage and suppression costs of \$390 million. Interestingly, the 1998 fires occurred during a La Niña event that followed the last strong El Niño. During this webinar, Scott Goodrick with the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station will discuss what managers need to know about the impacts of ENSO events on the 1998 fires and Florida wildfire seasons in general. Following the webinar there will be time for audience questions and answers. One hour of Category 1 Society of American Foresters Continuing Education credit is anticipated.



Click here to
register for this
webinar!

2015 National Prescribed Fire Use Survey Report

The National Association of State Foresters and the Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils recently published the **2015 National Prescribed Fire Use Survey Report**. This report summarizes results from a 2014 survey of prescribed fire activity, state programs, and impediments to prescribed fire use in all 50 states. You may remember the 2012 National Prescribed Fire Use Survey Report; the 2015 report is an effort to continue improving knowledge of national prescribed fire activity and to update data with current information.

Results at a Glance

- ⇒ Approximately 11.7 million acres in the U.S. were treated in 2014 with prescribed fire. This number includes federal, state, and private prescribed fire acres for forestry, rangeland, and agricultural burning.
- ⇒ Most prescribed fire activity (76%) was for forestry purposes.
- ⇒ With over 8 million acres of land treated, the Southeast region leads the nation in prescribed fire use. Florida, Georgia, and Oklahoma reported the most acreage burned in the region at >1,000,000 acres each.
- ⇒ As compared to 2011, there has been a 41% increase in the number of states offering education and training to certify prescribed fire managers. Almost every state in the Southeast region offers a state certified prescribed burn manager program.
- ⇒ The number of prescribed fire councils grew by 24%; every state in the Southeast region has at least one Prescribed Fire Council.
- ⇒ Similar to the 2012 report, the top three national impediments are weather, capacity, and air quality/smoke management. In the Southeast, air quality/smoke management, liability/insurance, and WUI/population growth were reported higher than the national averages for those categories.

Leaving Her Mark:

SFE Co-founder and PI Leda Kobziar Heads West

In October 2015, Dr. Leda Kobziar left the University of Florida to embark on a new and exciting opportunity with the University of Idaho. This transition wrapped up six years of dedication, enthusiasm, and exceptional leadership as the Principle Investigator of the Southern Fire Exchange. Through her pioneering vision, the Southern Fire Exchange developed from an early concept and project proposal into the regional source for fire science information in the South and a core member of the Joint Fire Science Program Fire Science Exchange Network. The SFE Leadership Team, Advisory Board, Steering Committee, and Key SFE Partners would like to express our sincere appreciation for Dr. Kobziar's accomplishments with the Southern Fire Exchange and within the fire and natural resource communities of the South!



SFE team members celebrate with Leda at their annual meeting at Tall Timbers Research Station in September 2015.

2015 NATIONAL PRESCRIBED FIRE USE SURVEY REPORT



UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit the [SFE Calendar](#) and the [JFSP Calendar](#) to learn more about upcoming events. To add an event to our calendar, send the event information to contactus@southernfireexchange.org.

Webinars

Recent Fire Research at the Silas Little Experimental Forest in NJ
February 4, 2016; 12pm Eastern

El Nino, La Nina and the 1998 Florida Wildfires
February 17, 2016; 1pm Eastern

Workshops and Trainings

Two SFE Field Tours in April 2016

****Registration coming soon!****

- Restoring Sandhill Ecosystems Workshop and Field Tour (April 27, 2016; Melrose, FL)
- Fire, Longleaf and the Palustris Experimental Forest (Date TBA; Longleaf, LA)

Longleaf Academy: Longleaf 101
Several sessions this spring throughout Southeast

Prescribed Fire and Woodland Management Field Tour

April 1, 2016
Rudolf Bennitt Conservation Area, MO

Use Prescribed Fire Safely and Effectively

April 28, 2016
Gainesville, FL

Prescribed Burning Workshop

May 5-7, 2016
Florien, LA
****Contact khawkins@agcenter.lsu.edu for info**

Southern Blue Ridge FLN

May 17-19, 2016
Johnson City, TN

Conferences

Wildland-Urban Interface Conference
March 8-10, 2016
Reno, NV

5th International Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference
April 11-15, 2016
Portland, OR

Collaborative Restoration Workshop
April 26-28, 2016
Denver, CO

Arkansas Wildlife Habitat Restoration on Private Lands Conference
3 field tour days, plus 1 day at conference
May 2-5, 2016
Batesville, AR

International Smoke Symposium
November 14-17, 2016
Long Beach, CA

RxCADRE Results Shared in Special IJWF Issue

The **RxCADRE**—the Prescribed Fire Combustion and Atmospheric Dynamics Research Experiment—has been a large-scale, multi-year fire research effort funded through the Joint Fire Science Program. This unique study was designed to collect data before, during, and after prescribed fires on multiple fire disciplines including fuels, fuel consumption, fire behavior, smoke emissions, and fire effects. After three series of collaborative prescribed burn experiments from 2008 to 2012 at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, the research team grew to more than 90 scientists from many fire-related organizations. A special issue of the *International Journal of Wildland Fire* (Vol 25(1), 2016) was just published to share research results from the project. You can check out the **paper titles and abstracts**, and read the **foreword** without a journal subscription. We will be sharing research highlights, especially those related to smoke emissions, with you over the next few months.



Learn more about the RxCADRE by reading the JFSP Fire Science Digest: **Capturing Fire: RxCADRE Takes Fire Measurements to Whole New Level**

The RxCADRE team collected a variety of measurements before, during, and after the collaborative burns at Eglin Air Force Base. Photo Credits: Roger Ottmar, U.S. Forest Service (left); Randy Gon, U.S. Air Force (middle and right).

Upland Ecosystem Groundcover Restoration Videos

The presentations from the morning session of the Upland Ecosystem Groundcover Restoration Workshop hosted by the Southern Fire Exchange, Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance, and The Nature Conservancy have been archived on the **Southern Fire Exchange YouTube Channel**. Check out the great presentations by David Printiss, Dr. Kay Kirkman, and Dr. Kevin Robertson!

SOUTHEASTERN REGION COHESIVE WILDLAND FIRE STRATEGY UPDATE

By Gary Wood, Southeast Region Cohesive Strategy Coordinator

Gary C. Wood started his role on November 1, 2015 as the Southeast Regional Coordinator for Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy. If you have questions or need assistance with the Cohesive Strategy, feel free to contact Gary at gwood@southernforests.org or (919) 369-8077.

Numerous agencies and partners across the Southeast continue to perform work on the ground that corresponds with the goals of the Southeast Regional Action Plan for Cohesive Strategy. However, their challenges, efforts and successes are not being reported or shared for others to learn from. Please share your stories and examples that also meet the Cohesive Strategy efforts. Just go to www.southernwildfire.net and utilize the template in the menu section.

Four national priorities were released in November 2015 by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC, an intergovernmental committee that guided the Cohesive Strategy development). The four national priorities determined by WFLC are:

- 1) Smoke Management and Air Quality,
- 2) Large Landscape Collaboration,
- 3) Reducing Risks to Communities, and
- 4) Environmental Compliance.

Task Groups have been established to determine priorities and implementation suggestions for each. The WFLC held their quarterly meeting on January 25-26, 2016 in Florida and Georgia. On January 25th, the group toured the Okefenokee Swamp area and learned about the challenges and opportunities with fire. They met with the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners and visited one of the smaller communities in the Fire Adapted Communities learning network. They also participated in a prescribed fire to understand the planning, coordination, and implementation involved—including smoke management. Representatives from the EPA participated in the meeting on January 26th, so the group could further explore opportunities for working on smoke management and air quality coordination. They also evaluated other priority issues and address areas of interest to forward to WFLC membership. To learn more about the WFLC, visit <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/leadership>.

NEWS AND REMINDERS

NEW FIRE NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTHEAST

Starting in January 2016, our partners in the **SERPPAS** Prescribed Fire Work Group will publish the *Driptorch Digest* e-newsletter on a monthly basis. [Check out the first issue!](#)

UPCOMING PRESCRIBED FIRE TRAINING EXCHANGES

Dates and locations for FLN Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges this spring have been announced. [Click here](#) for the full list.

NEW ARCHIVED WEBINAR

If you missed the **Methods for Determining Mixing Height** webinar in December, you can now view the recorded version at your convenience on the SFE YouTube page.

WILDFIRE COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS DAY

Start planning now for Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on May 7, 2016. Check out [the resources](#) available from the National Fire Protection Association for promoting your activities and projects. And you can [apply for a small grant](#) to support projects to reduce wildfire risk. Apply by February 28.

LESSONS LEARNED

The **Mud Lake Complex Facilitated Learning Analysis** and a **10-minute documentary** provide great overviews of the management decisions and lessons from a complex of fires in Big Cypress National Preserve last May. The management team took a variety of innovative actions based on conditions, fire behavior, values at risk, and ecosystem needs.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Cumberland Island Wildland Fire Program and their partners in the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners were recently awarded the **Department of Agriculture's Pulaski Award**. This national award recognizes superior efforts in interagency cooperation, firefighter and public safety, outstanding group performance, and development of partnerships and cooperation.



The Southern Fire Exchange is funded through the Joint Fire Science Program, in agreement with the United States Forest Service, Southern Research Station. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

LANDFIRE Needs Your Help

LANDFIRE—a national program that has developed vegetation models, comprehensive ecological descriptions, and GIS tools—is currently updating the Biophysical Settings (BpS) models and descriptions used for ecosystem classification and you are invited to contribute to this collaborative process. This is the first formal, complete review of all models and descriptions since they were developed many years ago. In addition to being important internally to the LANDFIRE Program, the BpS models are also used across the nation in a wide array of applications and landscapes.

By participating in this important endeavor, you can meet new people, learn about the models and descriptions, and contribute to a product that influences vegetation classification and management across the U.S. To get started, follow these steps:

- 1) Go to landfirereview.org to learn about the process.
- 2) Choose an ecosystem(s) with which you are familiar and download its description document.
- 3) Follow the instructions on page one of the description document, which directs you to turn on track changes, read the information, and provide feedback.

Your wisdom and experience are critical to improving this unique ecological product.

Congratulations John Weir and Cecil Frost

Every three years at the International Fire Congress, the Association for Fire Ecology presents Lifetime Achievement Awards in Fire Ecology and Management. The awards recognize individuals who have made a significant contribution to fire ecology and management and to those who have inspired and mentored a generation of fire ecologists. At the 2015 Fire Congress in Texas, two well-deserving individuals from the Southeast received awards.



- John Weir, a research associate at Oklahoma State University, was awarded the Henry A. Wright Lifetime Achievement Award. John has worked tirelessly in his career to train future fire professionals and to share science-based fire information with a variety of audiences. He has also been instrumental in the expansion of prescribed burning through the formation of Prescribed Burn Associations in Oklahoma, Texas, and other states; and he serves on the Southern Fire Exchange Advisory Board.
- Dr. Cecil Frost, a landscape fire ecologist in North Carolina, received the Stoddard Lifetime Achievement Award, which is given to individuals working in the eastern United States. Since his retirement in 2004 as the coordinator of the North Carolina Plant Conservation Program, Cecil has devoted his time as an independent contractor researching and mapping pre-settlement fire regimes and historical vegetation. Over the years, he has shared his research and knowledge with the fire community through several book chapters, publications, college courses and guest lectures, and engaging presentations.

Congratulations to John and Cecil for receiving these awards, and thank you both for your excellent contributions to fire ecology and management!

Backyards & Beyond Conference Presentations Are Available

Even if you did not attend the 2015 Backyards & Beyond Wildland Fire Education Conference, you can still learn from the conference sessions! Just visit the conference website, and you will find [conference presentations to view and download](#) on the following topics:

- ⇒ Community Safety Approaches/Strategies
- ⇒ Wildfire Planning, Suppression & Operations
- ⇒ Research (Physical, Social, Ecology & Environmental)
- ⇒ Technology, Policy & Regulations