Flatwoods Species Responses to Restoration Treatment and Season

In a recent CFEOR Newsletter update, authors Leda Kobziar, Eric Carvalho, and Adam Watts shared results of a long-term restoration experiment on Florida’s dry prairies at Myakka River State Park. Dry prairies are rare flatwoods ecosystems, supporting federal and state listed species and threatened by development and fire suppression. This restoration experiment compares mechanical treatments (roller chopping every six years, applied for the first 13 years) with and without fire (every three years; also in all sites starting in 2001) in both growing and dormant seasons over the 23 year timespan. Results show that, regardless of the season, mechanical treatments alone are less beneficial for achieving restoration objectives and that combined treatments yielded more desirable results than burning alone—suggesting that more frequent disturbance is beneficial to dry prairie restoration. Click here to see the summary in the CFEOR newsletter.

Cohesive Strategy and the Southeast

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) is a collaborative process that seeks to create a national fire strategy to address wildland fire management issues. In Phase I of the plan development, three national goals were established:

- **Restore and Maintain Landscapes**: Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.
- **Fire-Adapted Human Communities**: Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.
- **Wildfire Response**: All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.

Recognizing that different regions of the country have unique challenges, resources, and opportunities, Phase II was developed at the regional level. During this phase, the Southeast Regional Strategy Committee (RSC) guided a stakeholder-driven Regional Assessment to match the national goals to the wildfire needs and challenges found at regional and local levels. More than 1000 individuals provided comments, participated in forums and meetings, or responded to online survey requests which helped guide the regional strategy.
Partner Spotlight: The Longleaf Alliance

Since 1995, The Longleaf Alliance (LLA) has been working to “ensure a sustainable future for the longleaf pine ecosystem through partnerships, landowner assistance and science-based education and outreach.” As the majority of southeastern forests are owned by private, non-industrial landowners, LLA activities target and support this audience. To fulfill their mission, the LLA focuses on the following activities:

- Serving as an information clearinghouse on regenerating, restoring and managing longleaf pine;
- Providing networking opportunities for LLA supporters to connect with other landowners, managers and researchers with similar interests and problems; and
- Coordinating technical meetings and education seminars.

The LLA holds workshops and webinars that are designed to assist forest landowners, consultants, and managers in establishing and managing longleaf pine ecosystems. Information on prescribed fire and other fire-related topics are regularly included on agendas. As part of their Longleaf Academy series, the LLA offers workshops throughout the Southeast. This spring both Longleaf 101 (registration full; waiting list available) and Herbicides and Longleaf 201 (registration open) are being offered, with continuing education credits available. Click here for the schedule.

Stay up-to-date with LLA activities and news with the LLA Facebook page.

Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Risk

Fire season has started throughout much of the Southeast. This is a good time to remind ourselves about fire risk mitigation in and around the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Presentations at both the 3rd Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference in 2010 and the 4th Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference in Raleigh last month confirmed that most home ignitions during WUI wildfires occur from embers landing in, on, or adjacent to structures rather than from flaming fronts. Structural maintenance and retrofit may provide more effective protection for most homes than fuel breaks around communities.

Research over the last 10 years related to the ‘home ignition zone’ has resulted in a variety of resources and guidelines that can be used on your own home, or shared with clients, to reduce wildfire risk. Some of those resources applicable in the South can be found on the Firewise Communities webpage, the Wildfire Risk Reduction in Florida book, and the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Guide.

Smoke Predictions

An issue that received considerable attention during the Fire Behavior Conference in Raleigh was smoke production and movement, and fog interactions with smoke. We will highlight some of these presentations in fact sheets and webinars in the coming months. Several new (and old) tools will significantly enhance your ability to predict the possibility for super fog occurrence. One closely related tool that is now experimentally online for review and comment is the Experimental Fog Forecast Map on the Southern High Resolution Modeling Consortium website. The Forecast Maps are projected at 3-hour intervals over a 15-hour period. Take a look at it if you are wondering about possible fog formation the evening after your prescribed burn. Note that if UTC time is 00, EDT is 8:00 pm.

NRCS Longleaf Pine Initiative

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced the availability of technical and financial assistance to help private landowners in nine states restore and manage longleaf pine. The Longleaf Pine Initiative will help landowners improve habitat on agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest, and tribal land. Approved participants will receive financial assistance for implementing conservation practices including planting longleaf pine, installing firebreaks, conducting prescribed burning, and controlling invasive plants. For more information about this initiative, and a short, well-done animated video about longleaf and prescribed fire, click here.
Cohesive Strategy continued from page 1

Phase III includes a regional action plan that will serve as a roadmap for implementation of the Cohesive Strategy. The current draft of the Southeast Regional Action Plan contains 6 overarching strategies and 23 actions, grouped around 5 values, and a set of identified barriers to success.

The Cohesive Strategy website has great information detailing each development phase, reports, and presentations. You can also search Cohesive Strategy Success Stories related to goals, years, states, and agencies. The success of the Cohesive Strategy in the Southeast depends on the continued engagement and support of stakeholders. If you are interested in becoming more involved, please contact Mike Zupko.

Welcome Dr. David Godwin to New SFE Position

We are excited to announce that Dr. David Godwin is now working full-time with the Southern Fire Exchange as our Program and Outreach Coordinator. We have been fortunate to have David managing and improving the SFE Twitter program since its establishment in 2011. His new position will help expand and improve SFE fire science delivery activities, as identified through our needs assessment and subsequent evaluations. David brings an interest in exploring a variety of exciting new multimedia communication methods to convey fire science information. David completed his PhD at University of Florida’s School of Forest Resources and Conservation, with research focusing on the influence of forest and prescribed fire management regimes on soil carbon dynamics. He was a Presidential Management Fellows finalist and a 2010 IFSP Graduate Research Innovation (GRIN) award winner. Please join us in welcoming David to his new position! Feel free to contact him directly at: d.godwin@southernfireexchange.org.

Prescribed Fire Injury Highlights

the Need for Drip Torch and Nomex Safety

Following a serious injury to a ground ignitions crew member during an October 2012 prescribed fire in Washington, the Wildfire Lessons Learned Center released a detailed report with safety recommendations learned from this incident.

What happened: While using an agency approved drip torch to ignite understory vegetation, a US Forest Service (USFS) employee “felt heat on his pants” and observed that first his left, and then both of his Nomex pant legs were on fire. The employee extinguished the flames and attempted to remove the smoldering pants but was delayed due to difficulty in removing his boots. After receiving immediate assistance from a nearby crew member, the employee was flown via medevac helicopter to a nearby trauma hospital and later transferred to a burn treatment center. The individual received 2nd and 3rd degree burns to 20-25% of his body.

Why: A subsequent USFS investigation found that drip torch fuel was present on the employee’s Nomex pants and fire boots. Further analysis by the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) determined that the breather tube on the employee’s drip torch was inside the torch but not attached to the breather tube screw. While this detachment may have occurred during handling after the accident, it also could have led to significant fuel leakage from the screw, which may have led to the pants catching fire.

What to Do: This Lessons Learned report suggests that all persons tasked with operating drip torches and other liquid fuel ignition devices be familiar with the proper procedures to inspect and maintain them. In addition, all personnel should understand that Nomex clothing contaminated with fuel or other combustibles must be changed and laundered before being worn near flames or ignition sources.

Click here to see the full report. Also, review the NWCG Interagency Ground Ignition Guide for detailed information on drip torch use and safety.