



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Savannah District

News Release

Corps of Engineers and Forest Service partner to reduce wildfire threat



Release No: 09-09

March 20, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Savannah, Georgia – A unique partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Forest Service will result in a prescribed fire on 2,850 acres in McCormick, S. C. between McEntire Rd. at Goose Creek Farm and Leroy's Ferry Drive at Leroy's Ferry Campground. Weather permitting, the fire will likely take place on March 23 or during that week, and will be conducted using aerial ignition. Helicopters will drop approximately 12,000 ping pong-sized balls that ignite when landing on the forest floor. Forest Service personnel on the ground will ensure the fire is contained in the targeted area.

"Prescribed fire, or a controlled burn, is an important tool used by the Corps and the Forest Service to manage the natural ecosystem and ensure the woodlands' health," said Corps of Engineers' District Forester Ean Jones.

Under a Participating Agreement between the two Federal agencies, the fire will involve 1,093 acres of national forest land on the Long Cane Ranger District and 1,734 acres of land on the J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake Project managed by the Corps. The Corps land joins Forest Service property across the southwestern half of the burn area, an area with abundant wildlife. This effort marks the first time the two agencies have partnered on a prescribed fire in this area due to steep gullies and rough terrain. Because of the partnership, several miles of fireline will not be needed which is beneficial for the land and much safer for the firefighters.

"I am pleased that the Forest Service and the Corps have been able to partner on this burn which would not have been possible otherwise," said Long Cane District Ranger Anne Kiser. "Because the two agencies are working so closely together, we are able to eliminate several miles of fireline, allowing us to safely reintroduce fire to an important habitat."

"This burn benefits the forest by reducing accumulated natural fuels building up on the lands thereby reducing the fire hazard to surrounding property owners and to resources on these Federal lands," Jones said. "By using the Thurmond reservoir as the southwestern end of the burn, we can more easily control the direction and coverage of the fire."

"We are pleased to be working with the Corps on this prescribed fire, especially since this area hasn't been burned in several years," said Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests Fire Management Officer William Croll. "This is a great opportunity for the two Federal agencies to share resources and work together to improve forest health by eliminating shrubs and competing undergrowth and enhance habitat for local native species such as the wild turkey."

The Forest Service and Corps of Engineers conduct prescribed fires when weather conditions are most likely to reduce the risk of escaped fire and smoky conditions.

Contact:

Billy Birdwell
G. Jeanne Hodge
District Website
News Release

912-652-5014
(912) 652-5770

billy.e.birdwell@sas02.usace.army.mil
jeanne.hodge@sas02.usace.army.mil
www.sas.usace.army.mil
www.sas.usace.army.mil/pubs.htm

“We ask the public to be patient while we’re burning,” said Jones. Although Forest Service and Corps personnel will work to avoid any inconvenience to the public, motorists or residents near the burn may see smoke columns or experience reduced visibility in low-lying areas. Motorists encountering smoke on any road should reduce their speed and heed any warning signs or directions from road patrol officers.

For more information, contact Ean Jones, Corps of Engineers Forester at (864) 333-1114 or toll free (800) 533-3478 or William Crolly, U.S. Forest Service at (803) 561-4000.