



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Chattahoochee-Oconee
National Forests
Armuchee/Cohutta
Ranger District

3941 Highway 76
Chatsworth, GA 30705
(706) 695-6737

File Code: 5140/1920

Date: July 8, 2004

Dear Forest User:

The Armuchee-Cohutta Ranger District burns a portion of the total District acres each year in a controlled manner to reduce the fuel buildup, to restore ecosystems and to improve wildlife habitat. We will be conducting environmental analysis in the near future on a number of sites that are being proposed for burning over the next 3-5 years. Please review the following projects and submit your comments so that they can be included in our analysis.

The analysis will cover approximately 18,000 acres to be control burned ranging from 3000 to 6000 acres per year. Historically, we have burned an average of 2000 acres per year. One of the many goals in Fire Management is to reduce the risks and consequences of wildfire through fuel reduction. Special emphasis will be placed on areas that have houses or other structures on private property near the forested environment. These areas are currently being called wild land-urban interface (WUI) zones.

Additionally, the use of controlled burns assists in the restoration of the desired ecosystem. Some burns will be planned to reduce heavy fuel loading due to insects, disease and other natural catastrophes. Most often these burns are during the dormant season but sometimes the burns are during the growing season under dry conditions where significant fuel buildup is reduced and the site is prepared for the new ecosystem. Other ecosystem restoration is accomplished by fire when the ecosystem is dependent on fire to get established and be maintained. Longleaf pine is a fire dependent species and there are a number of understory species that will flourish with repetitive burns.

A third objective met through the fire program is the improvement of wildlife habitat. Wildlife prefers to browse on new succulent plant growth. Following a fire, new herbaceous and woody growth will sprout providing desirable food sources for wildlife.

The controlled burns will be carried out with approved burning plans which consider previous burning, objectives to be accomplished, smoke management, predicted weather and a post burn evaluation plan. Smoke management includes complying with the clean air requirements for the Chattanooga area and coordinating with the Georgia Forestry Commission outdoor burning program. The methods of ignition will be by hand crews and/or helicopters. The control lines will consist of features requiring little or no ground disturbance (roads, streams, well used trails, etc.), features requiring moderate work (existing firelines, temporary roads, wildlife opening, etc.) and new firelines constructed by dozer. Any fireline tying into or crossing an intermediate or perennial stream will be prepared by hand for a minimum distance of at least 80 feet from the stream. This distance will be increased based on slope and soil properties. All disturbed firelines will be seeded and mulched to control erosion.

Attached is a numbered list of areas that are being proposed for burning in the next 3-5 years. Also included are maps of the Armuchee and Cohutta Units to assist you in locating the individual burns on the District.



We are interested in your comments about these proposals and invite you to send site-specific written comments to us by August 6, 2004 at the Armuchee-Cohutta Ranger District office, or by email to mwmurphy@fs.fed.us. Thank you for your interest in your National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Debra L. Whitman
DEBRA L. WHITMAN
District Ranger