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Forest
Service

Shawnee
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DISTRICT RANGER ANNOUNCES PRESCRIBED FIRE DECISION

Murphysboro, IL, March 10, 2009 – Mississippi Bluffs District Ranger Dan Lentz announced his decision to use prescribed fire on approximately 5,650 acres in Jackson County, IL.

On September 22, 2006, a tornado struck the project area, impacting about 3,800 acres in Jackson County. A result of the tornado was substantial quantities of broken branches and downed trees on the ground, creating a heavy fuel load and the potential for high-intensity wildfire. Along with the tornado damage, the Forest Service is concerned with the change in forest structure and composition caused by decades of fire exclusion. Applying prescribed fire to the 5,650 acres over the next decade will reduce the tornado-caused debris and begin to restore the area to a native oak-hickory forest community.

The Forest Service recently completed an environmental assessment of the project area, wherein management alternatives were considered. This assessment was conducted by an interdisciplinary team of natural resource professionals, who not only relied on their own knowledge of the area and professional experience, but researched the best available science and worked with natural resource and emergency service professionals from a variety of other agencies. Based on the assessment of both the land itself and the science available, the decision was made that applying prescribed fire to the area is the best way among the alternatives considered to achieve the objectives of fuel reduction and forest community restoration.

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The total acreage included in the project comprises both national forest lands and private property belonging to 45 landowners who have expressed a willingness to include their land holdings in the prescribed fire.

A copy of the environmental assessment of this project can be obtained at either the Mississippi Bluffs Ranger Station in Jonesboro, the Murphysboro Work Station in Murphysboro, the Supervisor's Office in Harrisburg or on the Forest's website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/shawnee.

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