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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Hoosier National Forest Plans Spring Prescribed Burns**

**Purpose is to improve wildlife habitat**

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**Bedford, IN—March 4, 2009** The Hoosier National Forest plans to do several prescribed burns this spring. The burns will be done in the next few weeks as temperatures warm. According to Mike Davis, Fire Management Officer on the Forest, approximately 2,300 acres are prepared to be prescribed burned if weather permits.

An 800-acre area in Jackson County south of Houston at Fork Ridge is one of those planned for a spring burn. There are two areas each about 200 acres in Brown County; one called the Harris Tract near Spurgeons Corner, and another near Sundance Lake or Ogala. Another 350-acre area called the Wolf Tract on Deckard Ridge and Axsom Branch north of Lake Monroe, also in Brown County, is also slated for prescribed burning this spring. These areas will be burned for wildlife habitat improvement to stimulate the warm season grasses and reduce the encroachment of brush and trees. In each case the fire lines also include surrounding woodland to reduce the potential of spotting and improve control.

The burns also reduce the build up of natural fuels on the forest floor which reduces the danger of uncontrollable wild fires. Davis explains that under controlled conditions those fuels can be burned when the weather conditions are ideal and reduce the fire hazard for several years. "Without fire," he explained, "many of these ecosystems become stagnant and lose their biological diversity."

Another burn planned for the southern part of the Forest is a 750-acre area at Mogan Ridge in Perry County north of Tell City. The area is known ecologically as a barrens community because of its shallow rocky soils and droughty conditions. Globally, barrens communities are one of the rarest ecosystems. Biologists believe that the greatest threat to barrens ecosystems is woody encroachment due in part to many years of fire suppression and the interruption of a frequent fire regime that contributed to the creation of barrens communities. To maintain these areas, the Hoosier has re-established a burning program in the barrens communities and cyclically burns these areas.

The exact date of the burns will be dependant on weather and fuel conditions. Ignition will be primarily by hand using drip torches. According to Mike Davis, "Once we know the date that we'll start the burn, we'll let the public know." Davis also encourages anyone with medical issues that might be affected by smoke such as asthma or emphysema who lives in the area immediately around where a burn is planned to contact the Forest so we can make certain that they are aware of the burning date. "Spring burns normally don't have a lot of smoke impacts, but we want to do everything we can to minimize affects on our neighbors," noted Davis.

For questions on the prescribed burns or to report a medical condition please contact Kevin Wilson, Fire Engine Captain in the Bedford office at 812-275-5987. The Hoosier National Forest currently manages 202,214 acres of land in nine counties in south central Indiana.