

# Project Proposal:

## USDA State & Private Forestry Grant



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**Applicant:** Florida Division of Forestry

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**Project:** Certified Burn Manager Refresher Training

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**Project Lead:** Shaun Stewart  
Florida Division of Forestry  
(706) 542-9608  
[stewars@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:stewars@doacs.state.fl.us)

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**Project Proposal Abstract :** Certified Burn Managers in the State of Florida are required to take eight hours of refresher training every five years as part of the requirements to maintain their certification. Although a number of options exist, none really focus on re-educating prescribed burners. Current options include attending Prescribed Fire Council meetings, or a few fire related courses like S-290 Intermediate Fire Behavior. These options focus on one or two aspects of prescribed burning. Therefore, a need exists to develop training that focuses on Prescribed Fire issues, application, and evaluation. The proposal put forth in these pages is for a distance learning course that focuses on re-educating Certified Burn Managers on all aspects of Prescribed Fire.

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**Partnering Agencies and Groups:** The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, National Park Service, Hillsborough Community College, Florida Park Service, Volusia County Fire Services.

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**Project Location:** This training would be available to Certified Burn Managers throughout the State of Florida and would therefore benefit the entire State. Many of these Certified Burn Managers also apply prescribed fire in other states and would apply their training in these areas as well. Furthermore, located in the "pulpwood basket" of the southeastern United States, Florida's forests have national and global impacts on pulp, paper, and fuelwood markets.

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**Expected Completion Quarter:** Quarter 4, 2010

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**Total Federal Funding Request:** \$59,000 (FY '08)

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**Total Proposal Budget (Including Matching Funds):** In-kind services in an amount exceeding 2600 hours will be required to develop and implement the program. Compensation and benefits for the different pay grades involved were used to determine the value of the in-kind portion of the total budget.

	Florida	
Cost Category	REQUESTED	MATCH
Personnel		\$57,000
Materials & Supplies		
Equipment		
Travel		
Contracts	\$59,000	
Printing		
Administration		\$15,800
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$59,000</b>	<b>\$72,800</b>

**Project Description and Benefits:** Continuing education is vital to continued safe application of prescribed fire. In recognition of this, the State of Florida requires eight hours of education every five years in order for a Certified Burn Manager to maintain their certification. Currently the Prescribe Fire Council meetings and a variety of classes serve as this refresher training; however, these options focus only upon one of two aspects of prescribed fire. Additionally, class spaces are limited, and work schedules or travel restriction do not always allow for employees to attend classes or regional meetings. Establishment of a distance learning course that covers all aspects of prescribed burning will allow certified burners to get the training they need without travel and facilitate better understanding of the material by allowing students to learn at their own pace.

**Phase 1, Development:** Successful development of training materials will require input from different agencies from the State of Florida, specifically the various instructors that teach the Inter-Agency Basic Prescribe Fire course. Specific content for each subject of the refresher training must be determined, lessons written, videos produced, and study guides developed. All of this must then be reviewed, edited and packaged for delivery.

**Phase 2, Training:** Multiple agencies are involved in the development of training material and initial training of Certified Burn Managers, and the Division of Forestry has the responsibility to certify each Burn Manager and maintain records of certification. Therefore, it will fall upon the Division of Forestry to conduct this refresher training. A train-the-trainer class will be held to instruct 35 Division of Forestry employees (two per District {30}, four Regional Coordinators, and one statewide facilitator) on how to implement the distance learning classes using the WebROM system.

**Phase 3, Implementation:** Using a WebROM system, Certified Burn Managers would complete a course of study at their own pace and at a time that is convenient for them. This system allows dial-up internet users to access videos and audio files with the same speed and clarity of high-speed internet users. Study guide questions and quizzes will help the instructors determine if the students are gaining knowledge or might be missing the point.

While studying via distance learning, students will get a complete review of prescribed burning. Topics will include Legal Requirements (including any recent changes), Public Relations, Safety, Smoke Management, Fire Weather, Fire Behavior, Firing Techniques, Ecological Effects, plus Planning & Evaluation.

During the implementation phase, approximately 600 Certified Burn Managers could receive this refresher training. This program would also continue well beyond the grant period.

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**Project Evaluation Criteria Discussion:**

**National and Regional Relevance:** The proposed training will enhance continuing education of the Certified Burn Managers in Florida. Immediate benefits would be to retain Certified Burn Managers who will accomplish burns each year to reduce forest fuels and the intensity and severity of wildland fires. With recurring training on all aspects of prescribe burning safety, public relations, and ecological effect will be enhanced. Through proper application of prescribed fire, and a positive image, the ability to burn will continue far into the future, ensuring the ecological, social, and economic benefits continue.

**Prioritization:** *Florida's Forest Resource Plan, Setting the Course for 2030*, acknowledges that 80% of the State's forested land is owned by private landowners, who therefore, control the future of Florida's forests. The Plan recognizes that the Desired Future Conditions include a forest where the use of prescribed fire is an integral, accepted, and widely used management tool. Retention of, and regular training for, Certified Burn Managers are key points to achieving this Desired Future Condition.

**Meaningful Scale:** This proposal would affect landowners across the entire State of Florida. Also, forestry operations in Florida affect markets in at least two other states.

**Collaboration:** The development of this refresher training will involve the agencies and organizations that developed, and teach, the material for the Inter-Agency Basic Prescribed Fire Training course required for initial certification. These agencies and organizations include the Florida Division of Forestry, The Nature Conservancy, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, The National Park Service, the US Forest Service, the Florida Park Service, Hillsborough Community College, and the Volusia County Department of Fire Services.

**Outcomes:** All funding and resources will be directed towards development and delivery of the training material. Outcomes can be measured by the number of students that complete the training.

**Technology:** Although no geospatial technology will be used, development of a WebROM and the supporting website will be critical to the implementation of this proposal.

**Integrated Delivery:** Individuals from many agencies and organizations, as well as many private individuals, are included on the list of Florida's Certified Burn Managers. It is these Certified Burn Managers conducting prescribed burns that will deliver the public benefits of forest management.

**Leverage:** In-kind services from the Division of Forestry and partnering agencies will exceed the federal funding requested through this grant proposal.

**Influence Positive Change:** Certified Burn Managers completing this course will provide an immediate service to Florida by their continued commitment to the application of prescribed fire. Their education will provide support for the continuation of prescribed fire as a forest management tool. The development and institutionalization of this training will ensure that future Certified Burn Managers also receive the same training.

**Timeliness:** By the end of the three years there could be 400 to 600 Certified Burn Managers in the State of Florida who have reviewed all aspects of prescribed burning. Safer prescribed burning with a better public image will enhance our ability to keep this irreplaceable management tool.