



NEWS RELEASE



National Forests in Alabama - Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release

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Prescribed Burns Scheduled Throughout Alabama's National Forests

(Montgomery, Al) January 16, 2007 --- The USDA Forest Service is conducting prescribed burns on the Bankhead, Talladega, Conecuh, and Tuskegee National Forests during January through March. Fire specialists are planning to burn approximately 90,000 acres to reduce forest fuels, help plant and animal habitat, and protect communities from the threat of wildfires. The Forest Service is asking everyone to be careful and drive slowly with lights on low-beam if smoke reduces visibility.

“It is our responsibility to alert communities about prescribed burns taking place in the national forests,” said Greg Born, fire management officer for the National Forests in Alabama. During a prescribed burn, travelers and residents near the Bankhead, Conecuh, Talladega, and Tuskegee National Forests may see smoke in the area and an increase in uniformed Forest Service fire personnel. “We work hard to mitigate significant smoke impacts into a community,” said Born. “Public safety is always our main concern.” Forest Service fire personnel take into account weather conditions and fire behavior before conducting a burn. They work as a team to monitor the burns and make sure the fire does not cross the lines.

A prescribed burn is controlled fire ignited by experienced Forest Service fire specialists. When the weather conditions are just right, forest managers use prescribed fire as a technique to improve the health of the forest. According to Forest Supervisor Miera Crawford, national forests need special treatment to make them more productive. The land management plan requires the Forest Service to use prescribed fire as a tool to open the forest floor to improve wildlife habitat, eliminate competing vegetation, and protect forest neighbors from large wildfires.

Contact a Forest Service district office if you have questions about the following planned burns: Bankhead Forest is planning to burn 15,000 acres in Winston and Lawrence counties call (205) 489-5111; Talladega Forest-Talladega and Shoal Creek Districts are planning to burn 21,000 acres in Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne and Talladega counties call the Heflin office at (256) 463-2272 or the Talladega office at (256) 362-2909; Conecuh Forest is planning to burn 23,000 acres in Escambia and Covington counties call (334) 222-2555; Talladega Forest - Oakmulgee District plan to burn 21,000 acres in Bibb, Dallas, Perry, Tuscaloosa, Hale, and Chilton counties call (205) 926-9765; and the Tuskegee Forest is planning to burn 3,000 acres in Macon county call (334) 727-2652.