

Prescribed Fire on the Shawnee National Forest

The Shawnee National Forest uses fire as a tool to manage our public forests in southern Illinois. Scientific research has shown that fire helps restore and maintain our oak-hickory forests that support native plants, birds, and wildlife.

What is Prescribed Fire?

Prescribed fire is a planned fire that is overseen by professionals. *Think of it as medicine for the land.* Prescribed fires are performed under specific weather conditions and are designed to mimic fire that historically occurred on the forest.

Each project follows a carefully prepared prescribed fire plan. It is important to note that because of weather, it is difficult to predict when, or even if, each project will occur. The Forest typically burns between 10,000 and 15,000 acres per year in collaboration with adjacent private landowners, other government agencies, and non-profit organizations between the months of October and May.



Prescribed fire ignitions with a drip torch, Shawnee National Forest, USFS Photo.

By bringing fire back to the forest, the Shawnee National Forest hopes to:

- Encourage growth of a diverse array of native plant life.
- Ensure oaks remain the keystone species in our forests.
 - Oak trees provide food for over 100 different animals and are a key habitat for many more. Without fire, more shade-tolerant tree species will eventually replace oaks.
- Perpetuate prairie and savanna remnants found within the forest.
 - These remnant plant communities provide habitat for several early-successional songbird species, such as prairie warblers and red-headed woodpeckers. Maintaining open woodland conditions with fire, supports and increases biological diversity.
- Protect human property by reducing the amount of down, dead wood in the forest. This will reduce the intensity of future wildfires.

To learn more about prescribed burning on the Shawnee National Forest visit:

Shawnee National Forest Webpage:
fs.usda.gov/main/shawnee/home



Shawnee National Forest Facebook:
facebook.com/shawneenatlforest



Shawnee National Forest Twitter:
twitter.com/ShawneeNF

