

**Woodland Owner Lunch & Learn:  
Managing Your Woodlands with  
Prescribed Fire**



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## Who Are We?

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## Extension Forestry & Fire

- Landowner training and assistance
- Public outreach and education
- Professional development and science communication
- Coordination and collaboration



Cooperative Extension conducts a variety of fire-related programs in North Carolina.

**Poll Question:  
What is your affiliation?**

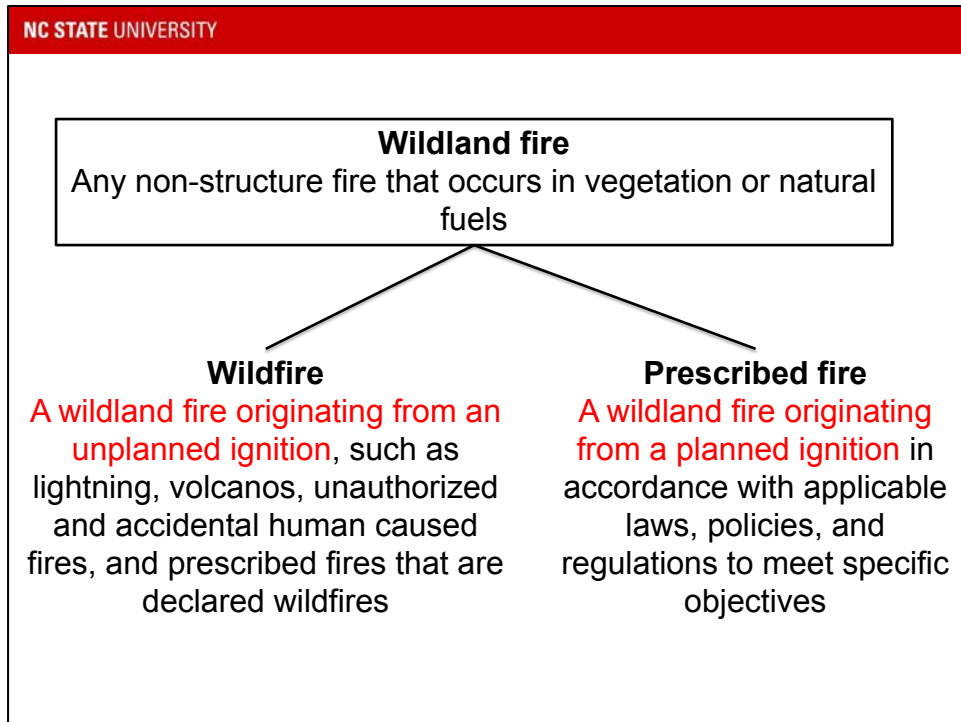
- A. Landowner
- B. Private Consultant
- C. State/Federal Agency
- D. Cooperative Extension
- E. Other
- F. More than one of the above

## Overview

- Background and History
- Prescribed Fire Benefits and Uses
- Conducting a Burn
- Liability and Risk
- Financial Assistance
- Technical Assistance
- Training Opportunities



**Fire:  
What does it  
mean to you?**



-We will be talking about prescribed fire in this presentation, but important to note the difference is in our human perception - whether a fire is classified as a wildfire or prescribed fire does not tell you anything about the fire behavior or effects, just how we as 21st century humans with a certain perspective define it

-While wildfires are usually talked in the news about when they are large and in the Western US, the Eastern US actually has more wildfires per year - they are just smaller and tend to be easier to contain, in part due to our widespread use of prescribed fire in the region

## Prescribed Fire and Wildfire Risk Reduction

In the South, there is a solid base of science showing that repeated use of prescribed fire decreases the risk of catastrophic wildfires

### Summary

Collectively, these studies indicate that 50 years of research have found similar results: In flatwoods ecosystems in the South, prescribed burning reduces wildfire risk for several years after the burn until the shrub understory and midstory recover. While Davis and Cooper's 1963 research is still supported, additional research in the last two decades has refined the fire risk reduction time interval to approximately two years following a prescribed fire.

### CONCLUSION

Results from this observational research are consistent with several other studies in the Southeastern United States. Addington, et al.

concluded that "our study provides evidence of the cumulative effect of landscape-scale prescribed fire in reducing wildfire activity over time." Furthermore, forests at Fort Ransom, like most of the forests in the

southeastern United States, are a fire-prone landscape and they will inevitably burn, whether or not it is intentional. Therefore, the authors suggest: "Prescribed fire offers a means of controlling the distribution of fire on the landscape both spatially and temporally, with benefits extending to smoke and emissions management." Prescribed fire will decrease the number of wildfires in those locations, in

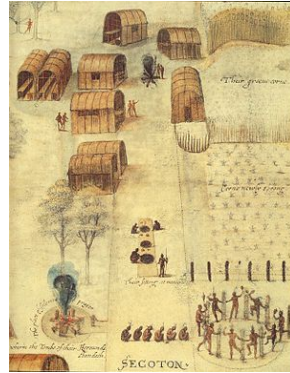
Further Reading:

<https://southernfireexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017-1.pdf>

<https://southernfireexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018-1.pdf>

## Fire History: The Pre-Columbian South

- Native Americans inhabited the South for thousands of years
- Native American nations used land and fire for many of the same purposes we do today



Village of Secoton, near Roanoke colony in present-day NC, watercolor by Roanoke colony leader John White

-Image: Village of Secoton, near Roanoke colony in now NC-watercolor by John White, original leader of colony

-“Myth of the Pristine” - idea that pre-colonial North America was a “pristine wilderness” is a myth, NC alone inhabited for over 12,000 years before Europeans, and while specific population estimates are uncertain, large numbers of people inhabited the region

-Native American nations had diverse thriving cities, trade relationships, cultures, and economies

-Used the land for agriculture, hunting, travel, warfare, and to harvest resources - fire was a part of each

## Fire History: European Arrival, Colonization, and Resource Exploitation

- Epidemics, forced removal, and loss of traditional livelihoods decimated Native American populations
- European colonists who settled on ancestral Native lands dramatically changed the landscape
- The 19th century was marked by rampant resource exploitation, particularly of longleaf pine in the South



-Images from top: 1) Craven County NC (Chuck Hemard) -

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/photos-capture-longleaf-pine-forests-american-south-1809-67891/>, 2) <https://www.ourstate.com/longleaf-pine/>

-Europeans arrived to a landscape that looked much different than the one we know

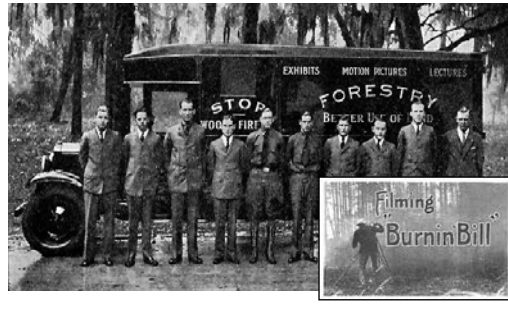
-Native Americans were forcibly removed from ancestral lands, Europeans who settled on those lands changed them drastically - cleared them for row crops, free-range livestock grazing

-Southerners continued to burn - combo of cultural familiarity and quick change in the landscape when fire is removed

-19th century - forests cleared across North America, particularly once railroads developed, longleaf in South heavily exploited for naval stores industry, lumber, often using slave labor

## Fire History: The Smokey Bear Era

- Dawn of the 20th century came with many changes in how people viewed the environment and fire
- Rise of fire suppression as an active policy led to efforts to end “woods burning” in the South



-realization that resources could be exhausted, progressive era conservation ethic, rise of forestry as profession, and large deadly wildfires all led to two things - understanding that resources needed management/protection AND belief that wildfires were destructive and to be stopped

-campaigns launched to stop Southerners from burning

## Smokey Bear



-Impossible to talk about fire suppression and the widespread mentality of it without talking about Smokey Bear

-Was established during WW2 when concerns arose about wildfires threatening timber supplies needed for the war effort

-More information:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/brief-history-smokey-bear-180972549/>

## Fire History: Resurgence of Fire and Modern Day

- US Bureau of Biological Survey (precursor to USFWS) research on quail decline found fire was a cause, contesting common understanding
- Now a growing understanding that prescribed burning is a crucial tool in achieving many different land management objectives

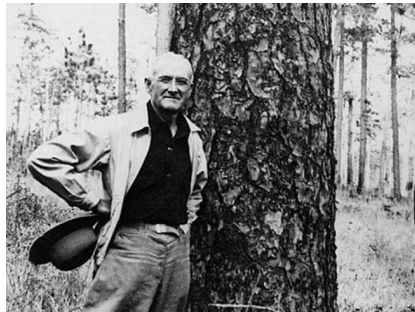


Image - Herbert Stoddard (quail research pioneer), New Georgia Encyclopedia

- Especially following the Civil War wealthy Northerners came to the South to hunt quail, as cheap land became readily available, they purchased plantations, bringing with them Northern attitudes that opposed the use of fire
- Resulting decrease in use of prescribed fire meant an increase in woody understory and less quail as a result
- By 1950s and 60s active programs were established for prescribed burning in Coastal Plain/lower Piedmont for pine and grassland habitats
- In the mountains, prescribed burning began in earnest in the 1980s

## Fuels Reduction



-Image - Ouachita National Forest

(<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ouachita/landmanagement/resourcemanagement/?cid=fseprd619122>)

-Dense, unburned stands can fuel catastrophic wildfires, wildfires that burn in areas that are regularly treated with prescribed fire are much less intense, and easier to control

-Other methods such as herbicide and mechanical treatments can also be part of a management plan in addition to prescribed fire

## Forest Health & Wildlife Habitat

- Helps control insects and disease
- Creates habitat for game and non-game species, including many that are threatened or endangered



Images clockwise from top left - Alabama Forestry Commission, National Geographic, The Cornell Lab

-while fire may sometimes kill individual animals, it benefits populations overall

-herbaceous plants that flourish after fire are more attractive to many wildlife species

-forest structure created by frequent fire also benefits many species - remember, many of the South's plants and animals evolved to a landscape that burned frequently

-different types of fire benefit different species

## Rangeland Management

- Improves grazing vegetation and reduces the need for fertilizers
- Reduces competition from some weeds, and produces palatable forage for livestock



Image - <https://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/cuts/grass-vs-grain>

## Site Preparation and Timber Management

- Prepares harvested sites for replanting
- Provides other benefits, like wildlife habitat, while benefiting preferred timber species



Images from top: <https://aaasoggybottomlogging.com/anson-nc-loggers/>, Robert Abernathy

## Aesthetics & Recreation

- Burned stands are beautiful!
- Allow recreation activities including hiking, hunting, and bird watching



Image - <https://www.treesatlanta.org/news/longleaf-pine-savanna-a-botanists-paradise/>, TNC (<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/green-swamp-preserve/>)

## Cultural Connection

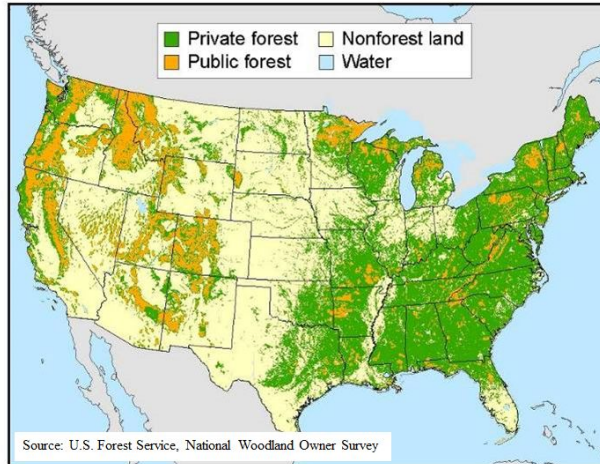
For many, particularly indigenous people, using fire is a way to connect to their heritage



Images from top - Brigita Leader, Seminole Nation of Oklahoma Historic Preservation Office (<https://talltimbers.org/seminole-nation-of-oklahoma-at-tall-timbers/>), <https://southernfireexchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2016-2-1.pdf>

## Importance of Private Lands

- Most land in the South is privately owned
- Accomplishing large-scale land management goals *must* include private landowners



-Image - US Forest Service via Yale University

(<https://environment.yale.edu/news/article/federal-grant-will-help-inform-family-forest-owners-about-land-options/>)

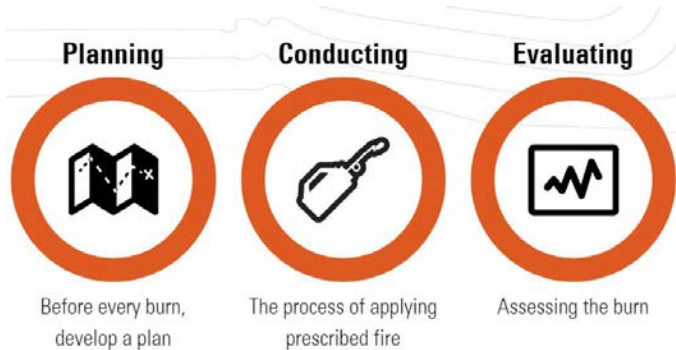


**Poll Question:**  
**How much experience do you have using  
prescribed fire?**

- a) I have never used it or seen it conducted
- b) I have never participated in a burn, but have watched others
- c) I have participated in 1-5
- d) I have participated in 6-10
- e) I have participated in 11 or more

## Prescribed Fire in Practice

- *A well-planned burn is much more likely to be a safe and effective burn*



## Prescribed Fire in Practice: Planning the Burn

- Key questions:
  - What are my objectives?
  - What resources do I need and have available?
  - What do my stand conditions need to be to meet my objectives?
- Using a burn plan is not only helpful, but required in some jurisdictions

-Prescribed fire is much more than just going out and burning - it is a process that includes time spent before and after the burn

-Planning timeframe depends on stand, experience, and other factors

Resources: <https://efire.cnr.ncsu.edu/efire/planning/>

## Prescribed Fire in Practice: Conducting the Burn

- This is the part of the prescribed fire process that most of us think of when we use the term
- Considerations
  - Burn crew and roles
  - Review burn plan and map
  - Equipment
  - Weather
  - Smoke management
  - Control lines



Image - Jennifer Fawcett

For more information, visit: <https://efire.cnr.ncsu.edu/efire/conducting/>

## Prescribed Fire in Practice: Evaluating the Burn

- Evaluating a prescribed fire helps plan next steps and inform future burns
- Timeframe
  - Immediate
  - Longer-term



-Image from: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.4996/fireecology.1203002>

-Resources: <https://efire.cnr.ncsu.edu/efire/evaluating/>

## Possible Landowner Barriers to Burning

- Resources
- Capacity
- Liability concerns
- Lack of:
  - knowledge
  - training opportunities
  - experience



## Categories of State Liability Law for Smoke and Fire Escape

- Strict Liability
- Simple Negligence
- Gross Negligence
- Uncertain



The NC Prescribed Burning Act provides civil liability protection - due to smoke only. You must comply with all portions of the Act to qualify. There is no law that provides civil or criminal liability protection for escaped fires in NC.

North Carolina is a simple negligence state for smoke. Across the United States, there are four general categories of state liability law (Melvin, 2018):

- Strict Liability holds a person legally responsible for harm even if no negligence was found;
- Simple Negligence holds a person legally responsible for harm if reasonable care was not taken;
- Gross Negligence holds a person legally responsible for harm only if it can be shown that they took less care than even a careless person would use (i.e., reckless disregard for safety);
- Liability is uncertain in states where laws and administrative codes are vague regarding prescribed fire.

Smoke management is key in a successful burn! Understanding the smoke management regulations in your state allow your burn to be conducted legally & responsibly. Smoke can be dependent on fuels, weather, topography, firing technique, size of the burn and the duration of the burn. Laws & policies vary between states regarding smoke, but management is always important.

Smoke Management Pocket Guide: <http://smokeapp.serppas.org>

## Risk Data

Entity	Spotfires (%)	Escapes (%)	Claims/Lawsuits
Federal Agency	0	0.8	*
PBA (1995-2012)	0	1.5	0/0
PBA (2015-2019)	13	3.0	1/0
Contractor 1	0	0	0/0
Contractor 2	1	0	0/0
Fact Sheet Authors	*	0.02	0/0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1/0</b>

\*Not reported

Table 1. Number of escapes in relation to number of prescribed fires by entity. A total of 23,050 prescribed fires resulted in one insurance claim of less than \$5,000 and no lawsuits. (Weir et al., 2020)

A spotfire is defined as an ignition occurring outside the planned burn area, but is extinguished by people and equipment on site. An escaped fire also is an ignition occurring outside the burn area, but cannot immediately be contained and requires outside assistance to extinguish. There has been very little data collected regarding spotfires and escaped fires, but what we do know is that escaped fires are very rare as are damage or liability claims resulting from escapes. As an example, a report from The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (WFLLC) documented 133 escaped fires or a 0.8% escape rate for 16,626 prescribed burns conducted by federal agencies on nearly 2 million acres of public land in 2012 (Table 1).

All of the information in Table 1 pooled together indicates that out of 23,050 prescribed burns, only 199 escaped fires were reported. This is a 99.1% rate for conducting prescribed fires with no escapes. We also have full records from 6,039 of these fires that were conducted on nearly 1.7 million acres without a single lawsuit being reported. From those same burns, there was only one minor insurance claim, resulting in 99.99% of the prescribed burns not having any insurance claims. All the reported and available numbers show that the landowners' perceived risk of conducting prescribed burns is likely overestimated.

Read the full article here:

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-11743/NREM-2905web.pdf>

## Reduce Your Liability

- Understand and follow your state's laws. Ex:
  - Providing notice to adjacent landowners
  - a watchperson guarding the fire
  - fully extinguishing the fire
- Have and follow a burn plan
  - Includes having adequate capacity and resources
- Become a Certified Burner (or hire one)
- Obtain prescribed burn insurance
- Increase your knowledge and experience

Liability is often cited as one of the main reasons that landowners & consultants are unwilling to conduct prescribed burns. There are several ways to reduce your risk of liability. In North Carolina, our state laws for prescribed burning fall under the Prescribed Burn Act. § 14-136 "Setting fire to grass and brushlands and woodlands" provides examples of how someone can be found guilty of misdemeanor & assessed a fine. Most tickets are given for allowing fire to escape due to insufficient burn resources or insufficient monitoring of the burn site. By understanding and complying with your state laws, you will significantly reduce your liability.

Increase your knowledge and experience:

- Join a Prescribed Burn Association (PBA)
- Become a member of your state's Prescribed Fire Council
- Attend courses, webinars, and workshops

Prescribed Fire Councils:

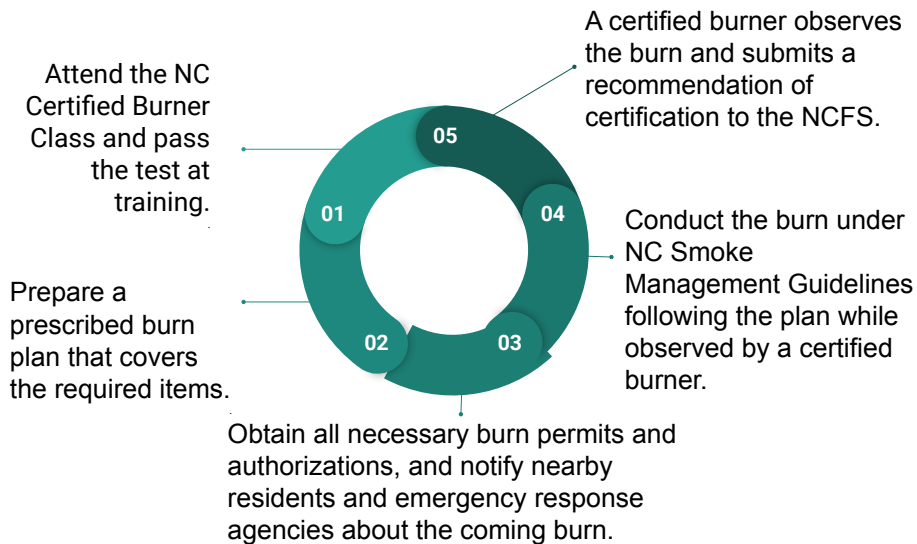
- Organized at the state & local level
- Connect individuals from public agencies and institutions, non-governmental organizations & the private sector who use prescribed fire
- Typically meet 1-2 times/year
- Meetings can consist of presentations, reports, field trips, and updates; continuing education credits are often available for attendees
- Check to see if your state has one!

More information can be found in the article, Prescribed Fire: Understanding Liability,

Laws and Risk:

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-11743/NREM-2905web.pdf>

## NC Certified Burner Program



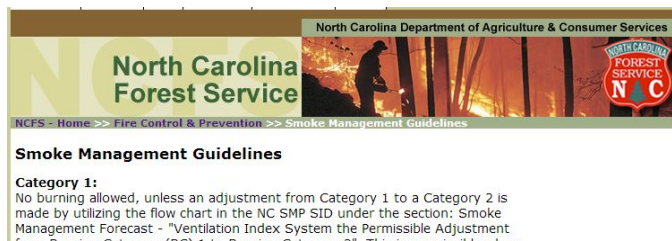
Some states have what is typically called a Certified Burner program. For states that offer this certification, becoming a Certified burner is a way to significantly reduce liability by gaining protection under your state's Prescribed Burning Act. Although you do not have to be a Certified burner to conduct burns, you may not receive protection from your state's Prescribed Burn Act if you are not Certified.

Every state has different requirements to become a Certified burner but most include, at a minimum, a training course and relevant burn experience. In NC, as a first step, you must attend the course offered by the NCFS and pass the test at training. Certified Burner training is held 2-3 times per year across the state and costs \$25.00. Watch the NCFS website for course announcements and registration information.

For more information and to see the full requirements in NC, visit:  
[https://ncforestservice.gov/fire\\_control/fc\\_howtobeacertifiedburner.htm](https://ncforestservice.gov/fire_control/fc_howtobeacertifiedburner.htm)

## NC Certified Burner Course Content

- NC State Laws
- Smoke Management
- Fire Behavior
- Techniques
- Laws
- Fire Weather
- Burn Plan
- Liability
- Test



These are an example of some of the topics that will be covered in this course.

**Poll Question:  
Are you a Certified Burner?**

- A. Yes
- B. No, and have no interest in becoming one
- C. No, but would like to learn more
- D. My state does not have a Certified Burner Program

## Range of Insurance Prices

Annual <sup>1</sup>	Per Burn <sup>1</sup>	Deductible <sup>2</sup>	Per Occurrence <sup>3</sup>	Aggregate <sup>3</sup>
\$250-25,000	\$250 & up	\$0-5,000	\$100,000- 1 million	\$100,000-2 million

<sup>1</sup>To be paid by the insured on an annual *or* "per burn" basis.

<sup>2</sup>To be paid by the insured in the event of a claim.

<sup>3</sup>Maximum coverage provided by insurance company in the event of a claim.



Prices vary widely between companies. Do your homework-which works best for you?  
More information can be found at:

<https://research.cnr.ncsu.edu/blogs/southeast-fire-update/insurance/>

### When looking for insurance, here are some important items to consider:

- A "per burn" policy may be more appropriate than an annual policy for those who burn infrequently or burn a small amount of acreage.
- Some companies only provide coverage to agencies or forestry consultants who provide prescribed burning as a service, while other companies also provide coverage to private landowners.
- Prices vary by state, payroll, percent of burning conducted in relation to overall forestry services, average annual burn acreage, years of experience, membership in an affiliated organization, etc.
- Options may be available for the amount of deductible, per occurrence, and/or aggregate coverage.
- Additional umbrella/excess liability policies may be available to provide

- coverage above the primary limits.
- Some insurance companies provide discounts or other benefits to members of certain organizations. Examples of these organizations include the [Association of Consulting Foresters](#), [Society of American Foresters](#), [National Wild Turkey Federation](#), and [The Longleaf Alliance](#). For savings on insurance costs, burners may consider joining one of these organizations in which affiliated insurance providers offer reduced rates to members.
- Liability insurance can oftentimes be tax deductible.

## NRCS Financial Assistance: 2020 State Payment Schedules



The 2020 Payment schedules can be found at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?cid=nrcseprd1328426>. NRCS provides financial assistance for selected conservation activities. The availability and amount of financial assistance can vary between states. Click on your state in the map to see which practices qualify and how much financial assistance is available. Funding for prescribed burning is available through the EQIP and the Conservation Stewardship (CSP) programs.



## Example 2020 EQIP Payments in NC

Practice	Cost (Range)
Prescribed Burning Plan - Written	\$278.85 - \$1,606.18
Prescribed Burning	\$43.30/ac - \$63.02/ac
Firebreak	\$0.07/ft - \$1.32/ft

Rates vary by practice and by state. Contact your state NRCS agent for details on how to apply. If you receive funding, be sure to find a PBA member, contractor or your state forestry agency to conduct the burn if you are not planning to do it yourself; it could take more than a year to get the burn completed, so it is important to start looking into it as soon as you are selected in order to stay within the timeline of your contract.

Prescribed Burning Plan Less Than or Equal to 20 Acres - \$278.85

HU-Prescribed Burning Plan Greater Than 1000 Acres - \$1,606.18

Understory Burn - \$43.30

HU-Native Grass Burn - \$63.02

FireBreak-Disked - \$0.07

HU-Constructed - Medium equipment, steep slopes ( $\geq 15\%$  slopes) - \$1.32

## NC Forest Service Financial Assistance

- Forest Development Program (FDP)
  - May cover up to 40% of the prevailing rates  
[https://www.ncforestsERVICE.gov/Managing\\_your\\_forest/fdp.htm](https://www.ncforestsERVICE.gov/Managing_your_forest/fdp.htm)
- Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program (SPBPP)
  - May reimburse up to \$15/acre for 1<sup>st</sup> time burns and \$20/acre for repeat burns for qualifying pine stands 10 years of age or older.  
[https://www.ncforestsERVICE.gov/forest\\_health/pdf/SPBPPCostShareHandbook.pdf](https://www.ncforestsERVICE.gov/forest_health/pdf/SPBPPCostShareHandbook.pdf)

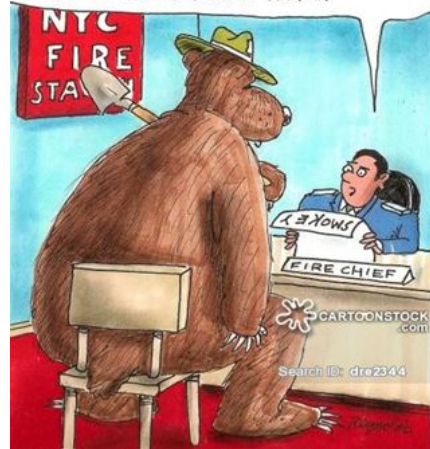
Cost-share funding for FDP is in short supply, but SPBPP is currently well-funded. Contact your NCFS County Ranger with questions or to apply for either program. Other financial assistance options may also be available, which your County Ranger or local NRCS agent may know about.

## Technical Assistance

- State Forestry Agencies
- Consultants
- Landowner Associations or PBAs
- Partnerships/NGOs
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Others



Your resume says, 'Only You can prevent forest fires.' Listen, pal...we work as a team here.

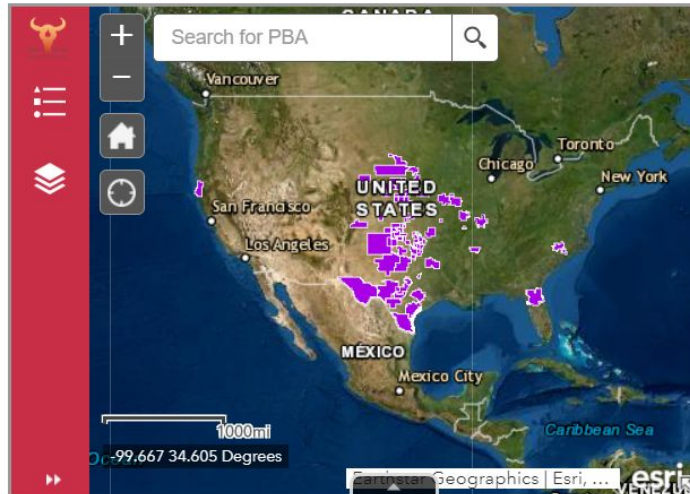


Many states in the South provide online vendor databases for prescribed burning either on the state forestry agency website, or through the Prescribed Fire Council. On these sites, prescribed burn contractors can add their business to a list where private landowners can then search the database to find a contractor who offers prescribed burning in their area. Read more information and find a contractor in your Southern state here:

<https://research.cnr.ncsu.edu/blogs/southeast-fire-update/prescribed-burn-contractors/>

Your state or local Cooperative Extension office or state forestry agency may also know of other opportunities.

## Prescribed Burn Associations (PBAs)



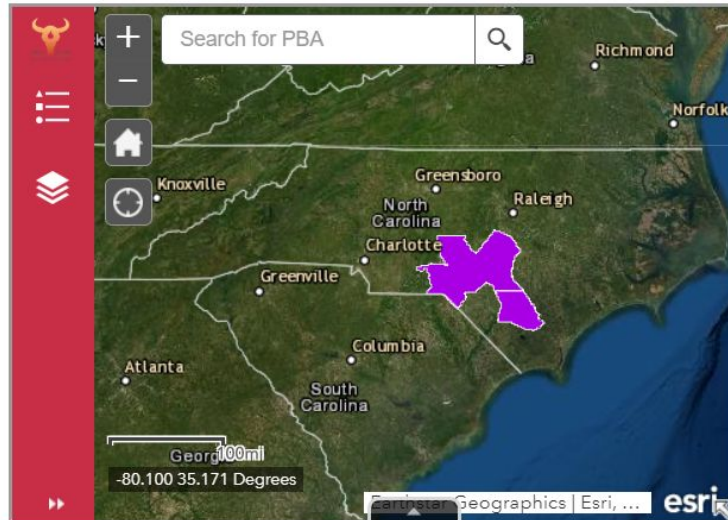
A Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) is a group of landowners and other concerned citizens that form a partnership to conduct prescribed burns. Association members pool their knowledge, man-power and equipment to help other people in their association conduct prescribed burns.

More than 70 PBAs are now found in about 12 states across the U.S., depicted [on this map](#). PBAs can also be informal or in the form of a County Forestry Association, or other type of Landowner Association.

Numerous resources and opportunities are available regarding PBAs. Some of these have been compiled and are provided here: <https://research.cnr.ncsu.edu/blogs/southeast-fire-update/prescribed-burn-association-sl/>.

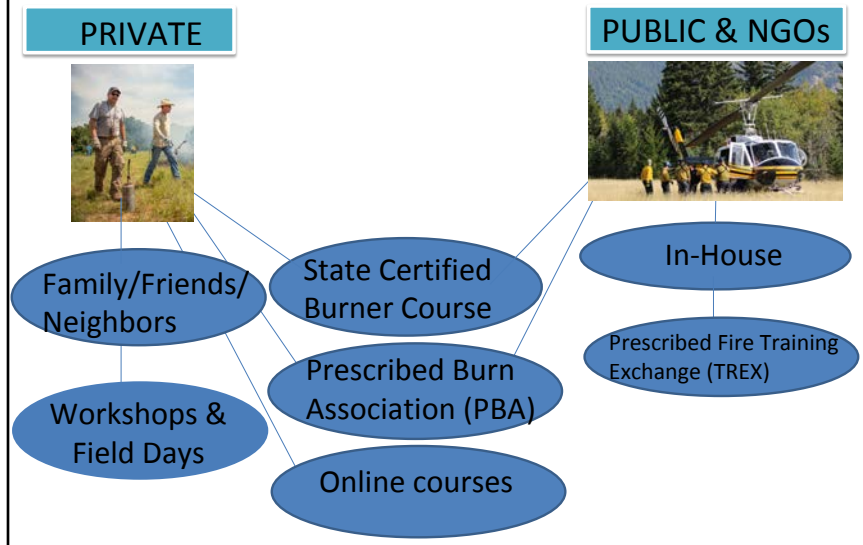
For more information: Diaz, J., J. E. Fawcett, and J. Weir. 2016. The Value of Forming a Prescribed Burn Association. Southern Fire Exchange Fact Sheet 2016-2.

## PBAs in NC



There are 3 PBAs in NC, two of which are shown on this map (<https://www.gpfirescience.org/agencies/>). The third is located in the eastern part of the state.

## Options for Rx Burn Training



There are fewer training opportunities for those people who don't work with an agency or an NGO, but some are available.



In-person options include workshops, field days, and other training events from:

- PBAs
- Extension
- State forestry agencies
- Southern Fire Exchange
- Non-governmental organizations (ex. Longleaf Alliance, Forest Stewards Guild)

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

# E FIRE

[go.ncsu.edu/efire](http://go.ncsu.edu/efire)



Lighterwood Farm

Lighterwood Farm

Family Background and Crops

JESSE WIMBERLY

Family Background and Crops

42

The eFIRE site is an online course comprised of a series of short videos, readings, and quizzes. It goes through the steps of why and how to plan, conduct, and evaluate a burn. There are also 360 degree videos in which you can see a burn taking place. In addition, a Basic Prescribed Fire Training will soon be hosted on the Oklahoma State University website.

# Introduction to Prescribed Fire Courses

<http://campus.extension.org/>

The screenshot shows the 'campus.extension.org' website interface. At the top, it says 'Brought to you by experts from the nation's largest and oldest network of universities.' Below this is a search bar with the text 'Prescribed Fire' entered. A red oval highlights the search bar. To the right of the search bar, a green arrow points to the 'Energy & Environment' category button. Below the search bar, there are several category buttons: 'Agriculture & Animals', '4H & Youth', 'Yard & Garden', 'Community & Economics', 'Home & Family', 'Organizational Training', 'Energy & Environment', 'Pest Management', and 'Admin (limited access)'. A green arrow points to the 'Energy & Environment' button. Below the category buttons, a box titled 'Sub-categories' is shown, containing 'Forestry' and 'Rangelands'. A green arrow points to the 'Forestry' sub-category.

*Note: This course provides basic information and does not provide certification.*

The Introduction to Southeastern Prescribed Fire is available at: <https://campus.extension.org/course/search.php> (search "prescribed fire" or follow the steps in the diagram above). A Basic Prescribed Fire Training will also soon be hosted on the Oklahoma State University website.

## Additional Training Resources

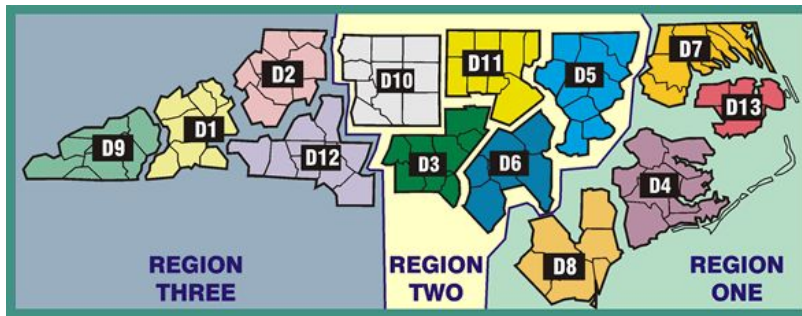


- Southern Fire Exchange fact sheets and webinars: <https://southernfireexchange.org/>
- Cooperative Extension programs
- Much, much more!

## Questions about Next Steps?



Your state forestry agency is a great first call - they are likely to be the most familiar with information and assistance options available in your area.




We realize that this is a lot of information, and it will be hard to remember it all! If you're confused about anything or have questions you can contact us, or reach out to your state forestry agency. In NC, the County Ranger is the key contact for programs and services offered in your county. The local NC Forest Service contacts can be found here: [https://www.ncforestservice.gov/contacts/contacts\\_main.htm](https://www.ncforestservice.gov/contacts/contacts_main.htm). Just choose your country from the drop-down menu. For questions about financial assistance for burning, contact your local NRCS agent.


## Thank You! & Questions?



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You can also contact us with any additional questions, and we can help point you in the right direction. Thank you!