



# North Florida Prescribed Burn Association Newsletter

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## Message from the President



There's a small block of 22 year old pines on our place that LouAnn and I have burned 4 times in the last 6 years. In addition to the burning, we've been herbiciding some of the individual stems as they've re-sprouted. The last burn was on a warm and windy day in April. We'd finally ginned up the courage to run an aggressive burn through there so as to hit hard the mid-sized hardwoods which had survived the previous burns, hoping to actually kill a fair portion of them.

We were able to get aggressive both because there was a black area (1 week old) forming 2 of our baselines and because the previous 3 burns had reduced the duff and the mid-story to where we could do it safely. And do know, "Safely", included knowing that we'd not be damaging the pines, a big concern for us.

Almost 6 years ago as we surveyed the stand a few weeks after the first burn it looked for all the world to us as if we'd accomplished nothing, or at best very little. The second burn resulted in us catching the duff on fire which smoldered for over a week until nature decided to put it out. We were sure we'd ended up cooking the roots of at least a few pines, though on the upside we were equally as sure that we'd done the same to some of the hardwoods.

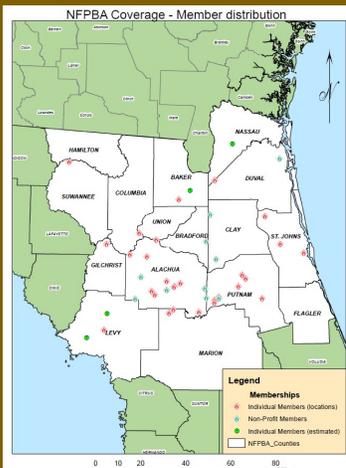
Fortunately we had no pine mortality, and only a few of the hardwoods died. Still, there was now a noticeable improvement in the stand as far as hardwood encroachment goes.

The third burn, another dormant season burn, built on the success of the second. Because we were now quite able to see success we were motivated to put even more time in with the herbicide as things re-sprouted, which compounded the good. We also noted after this third burn that in the fall the stand literally exploded with color, yellow mostly, as the "seedbank" we all hear the biologist talk about proved beyond a doubt it's existence.

Our expectations for this fall's color display in the stand are even greater. And the pines look good, and the wildfire risk in there is nil. And I could go on.

Now the point of this recounting is that with a similar persistence the NFPBA at this point is, at least in my mind, someplace between that second and third burn. We're now to the point where we can actually see some successes, the groundwork for further success well laid. A structure is in place, the efficacy of the concept is proven and it seems we've built up a level of confidence not only in ourselves and the concept, but also within the agencies and NGOs.

In a way this coming fire season affords us the same opportunity LouAnn and I had this past April, to get a bit aggressive, with a reasonable expectation of significant success in driving our core mission.



**Links to Relevant Articles (ctrl/click to open)**

[FWC Bear Management Plan](#)

[Mechanical Treatments and Herbicides as Fire Surrogates](#)

[Backfire Technique for Prescribed Burning](#)

**Upcoming events**

December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Learn and Burn:  
[Invasive Species Control and Prescribed Fire](#)

January 25, 2020  
[Red Hills Fire Fest Tall Timbers](#)

**Connect or Contact Us**

**Website:**

<http://www.northfloridapba.org/>

**Facebook:** [North Florida Prescribed Burn Association](#)

**Email:**

[NFPBA2017@gmail.com](mailto:NFPBA2017@gmail.com)

**General Membership Meeting:** The General Membership meeting will be held on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at the Florida Forest Service's Wacasassa Forestry Center in Gainesville. Election of Officers are scheduled for this meeting. The full meeting agenda will be sent out via email in December. Please mark your calendars now.

**Membership Reminder:** There are 9 individuals with 1 year NFPBA memberships. These memberships end on 12/31/2019. Please consider another year of membership or upgrading to a 3 year membership.



**Florida Black Bear Management Plan and Prescribed Fire --- Notes from the 2019 FWC Plan**

Among the reasons we burn, enhancing for wildlife is often near the top of the list. And while we may generally be thinking about increasing populations of deer, turkey, quail and other smaller wildlife, prescribed burning also has an effect on bear population and distribution also. Following are a few quotes from the FWC's Draft for the 2019 update of Florida's Bear Management Plan.

The whole plan is linked below. The FWC drew together a pile of interesting history that is worth knowing as it maybe be useful in contexts other than black bear management. Some of the snippets are below in *italic*.

*Harlow (1961, p. 491) described optimal bear habitat in Florida as "a mixture of flatwoods, swamps, scrub oak ridges, bayheads and hammock habitats, thoroughly interspersed." A key attribute of high-quality bear habitat throughout these natural communities is some area with nearly impenetrable understory (Pelton 2001, p. 229).*

*Bears have been expanding their range over the past 40 years (Williams 1978, Maehr and Wooding 1992, FWC,*

*Bears were noted by early Spanish explorers (Adorno and Pautz 2003, p. 65) in what is now Florida near the time of the first European contact, when there may have been about 11,500 bears.....*

*By the late 19th century, practices associated with farming, ranching, and the naval stores industries significantly changed the composition and structure of Florida's landscape, and bears were no longer considered common*

*During the early 20th century, half of the forests in Florida were burned each year for range improvement (Kendrick and Walsh 2007, p. 435). Burning some areas in spring and fall was so common that the combined area burned in one year was larger than the entire landmass of Florida (Pyne 1982, p. 144)*

*By 1940, approximately 24% of Florida's landmass was being farmed, mostly by subsistence farmers (USCB 2009). The result of these land-use practices was to promote an open landscape with a sparse understory, evident in the aerial photographs of Florida taken from 1935 to 1950 (SUS 2005), that likely supported few bears. By this time, the statewide bear population had dropped to 300 (GFC 1940)*

*Present day forests are managed with a suite of plant and wildlife species in mind. Florida has many fire-climax communities and land managers use prescribed fire as a tool, where appropriate, as part of science-based forest ecology. Though prescribed fire is commonly used, it is currently used much less frequently and on much fewer areas when compared to the early decades of the 20th century, resulting in forests with a denser understory and greater shrub cover. Forests with this type of structure provided good habitat for bears and allowed recovering populations to expand.*

## **Native flora response to fire - FWC Landowner Assistance Program personnel**



Many of Florida's natural communities, including pineland forests, are fire-dependent systems that require recurring fire to maintain their natural association of plants. Prescribed fire is an effective substitute for naturally occurring fire and is an extremely important wildlife habitat management tool since it consumes dead plant material, stimulates new plant growth by recycling nutrients, increases seed production and germination in many plant species, and helps control insect pests and plant diseases. Without fire, the variety and number of plant species will decline over time as oaks and other hardwoods compete with groundcover species for light and eventually inhibits fire.

For a fire-adapted plant to survive, it must experience fire at a certain frequency, intensity, and season. The frequency of historic fires depended on habitat type, the intensity depended on fuels and weather, and the season was often determined by when lightning occurred. There are some species, such as wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*) that will only produce viable seed if the right burning

season is met (April- July) or such as lopsided Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum secundum*) that will prolifically flower the 2nd year after a burn. The successful regeneration of longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) requires contact with bare mineral soil that is best provided by a summer fire prior to autumn seed drop and germination. Some species, such as sand pine (*Pinus clausa*) have serotinous cones that will release the majority of its seeds only after exposure to high temperatures from a burn. One of the more noticeable fire effects occurs in the fall after a spring burn, when wildflowers such as blazing star (*Liatris* spp.), ironweed (*Vernonia* spp.), and vanillaleaf (*Carphephorus odoratissimus*) are heavily in bloom. Learning each plant species' needs will open opportunities to increase the numbers of a particular plant across the landscape when developing burn plans.

As prescribed fires are re-introduced into a system, fire-dependent native flora that was once shaded under vegetative cover will be stimulated to grow. Their seeds waited, dormant in the soil for decades, for fire and sunlight to reappear. A particularly interesting resurgence of native flora was experienced at South Prong Plantation in Baker County after every-other year fires were conducted in flatwoods under slash pine stands. Following a series of a half-dozen fires, the state-endangered Chapman's fringed orchid (*Platanthera champmanii*) began to flourish and became the largest known population in north Florida. The conservation value of this orchid population piqued the interest of the Florida Native Plant Society and the Botanical Gardens of both the Atlanta and Jacksonville Zoos. These organizations coordinated with the landowner, who understood the importance of private lands in habitat conservation, to survey and mark the locations of these delicately fringed orange-flowered orchids and then return in the fall to collect their seeds to assist future management of this fire-dependent imperiled species.

Prescribed fire is a unique management tool used to control encroaching hardwoods, cycle nutrients back into the soil, and increase the number of flowering and fruiting shrubs and grasses that can create food and shelter for wildlife year-round. When used on private lands, this tool can significantly advance habitat conservation across Florida, and on your own property.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Landowner Assistance Program's biologists work with private landowners to help them manage wildlife and their habitats by providing management recommendations and helping find financial assistance for habitat work. To learn more about managing wildlife on your property, check out our Managing Your Land section online at [MyFWC.com/LAP](http://MyFWC.com/LAP). If you need technical assistance you can also contact the LAP regional biologist at the nearest FWC Regional Office.

## **Hotspot Profile: Scotland Talley**

Our newsletter's featured member is our Treasurer, Scotland Talley. His maternal grandmother suggested his unusual first name as a way of recognizing the family heritage.

Scotland currently works as the North Central Region Conservation Biologist for the Wildlife and Habitat Management Section of FWC. He started his working life in the hospitality business and has worked about every job in the hotel and restaurant industry as a teen and into his 20's. In his late 20's he began working for several building contractors as a carpenter. A random project rebuilding a barn on the coast of Georgia sparked his interest in wildlife and land management and he returned to school. He graduated from Glynn Academy in Brunswick, Ga. in 1981 and then graduated from the UGA Warnell School of Forest Resources in 1996 (Go Dawgs!) and completed his MS in 2002 at the LSU School of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries (Geaux Tigers!). He has been a Florida certified prescribed burn manager in 2007.

His mother (Cookie) and father (Pat) still reside on St. Simons Island and his brother (MacGregor) lives on Wilmington

Island near Savannah. Scotland's wife, Leslie, is from a small central Kentucky town called Rochester. Scotland enjoys hunting, gardening, fishing and walking in the woods with his dogs.

He is a prescribed burning advocate for professional as well environmental reasons. As he points out, fire, as a natural ecological process, accomplishes many things for the land manager. Fire manages fuels to prevent catastrophic fires, drives a diverse plant community that benefits wildlife diversity, and creates an open park-like forest savanna that is very aesthetically pleasing. Other tools can be used to achieve some of these benefits, but none are as effective as fire.

You might be surprised that Scotland once worked as a magician's assistant for a master illusionist. He says it is not as glamorous as it sounds, but he does know a few secrets!