



FACT SHEET: Prescribed Burns

Wildfires are a common threat to structures in many areas of North Carolina, especially during drought and times of high winds. Prescribed burns are a proven and safe way to reduce fuel loads in forests and other areas and prevent wildfires.

A prescribed burn is a planned fire conducted to achieve specific objectives. Many North Carolina ecosystems require periodic fire for maintenance, increased productivity and overall health. Land managers conduct prescribed burns for several reasons:

- **Hazardous Fuel Reduction:** Prescribed burning reduces the buildup of dead vegetation (like leaf litter, dead branches, etc.) which can serve as fuel for wildfires. Thus, the burns help decrease the chances for wildfires, which can damage homes and other structures.
- **Benefits to Fire-Dependent Ecosystems:** Many plants and animals need periodic fire to thrive. Prescribed burns can reduce competition, release seeds and add vital nutrients that benefit these species.
- **Wildlife Management:** Prescribed burning promotes many plants that attract and benefit wildlife by providing food, cover and opportunities to raise their young.
- **Forest Management:** Prescribed fire can be used for site preparation, disease control, reduction of some invasive species, and management for fire resistant species among other things.

At Hemlock Bluffs Nature Preserve, prescribed burns will help reduce hazardous fuels on the forest floor near a preserve border. The burn will also increase the number of close-to-the-ground plants like blueberry and huckleberry which produce fruits eaten by birds and other wildlife. In addition, the burn will help future oak seedlings of the upland better compete and thrive, while reducing fire intolerant woody species of uplands like red maple and American beech.

PRESCRIBED BURNS AT HEMLOCK BLUFFS

- Prescribed burns at Hemlock Bluffs will be supervised and implemented solely by trained individuals with the NC Forest Service or NC State Parks, with practical logistical assistance from Town staff.
- The preliminary burn plan calls for a prescribed fire about the size of a two football fields to be conducted at Hemlock Bluffs (annually if possible) during the winter season of December-early March.

- Certain sections of select trails may close briefly on burn plan treatment days. Details will be announced via the Town's Web site and electronic mailing list service, as well as via flyers at the Stevens Nature Center. Trails will be well-signed and patrolled by natural resource managers and preserve staff.
- The Town of Cary is bringing the necessary resources and experts to bear on implementing a prescribed fire management plan that will focus on fuel reduction and wildfire prevention while protecting this state treasure.
- We are committed to cooperating with natural resource managers to develop and implement a prescribed fire protocol and long-term management plan that effectively improves habitat for wildlife while reducing fuel loads, thus minimizing wildfire impacts to nearby property owners. Safety is our top priority.
- Despite select trails being closed during prescribed burns, Hemlock Bluffs Nature Preserve will remain open, and we continue to encourage everyone to come out and enjoy themselves as usual.

HEMLOCK BLUFFS NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Hemlock Bluffs Nature Preserve is a unique 158-acre site in southern Cary where 235 Eastern Hemlocks (*Tsuga canadensis*) grow along north-facing bluffs, far from their normal range in the foothills and mountains of North Carolina.
- Located at 2616 Kildaire Farm Road, the Preserve is a partnership between the Town of Cary – which maintains the Preserve, operates the programs, and owns the structures -- and the State of North Carolina, which owns most of the land and helps guide its stewardship.
- The Preserve includes three miles of trails and the Stevens Nature Center, a 3,700 square foot visitor and educational facility that opened in 1993.
- The nature preserve is managed year-round to benefit plant and wildlife communities by Town staff with cooperation from NC State Parks and other natural resource managers.
- Sound environmental management applications are combined with appropriate resource protection for the nature preserve at all times.
- Hemlock Bluffs has a natural resource management plan developed by preserve staff and NC State Parks, as well as a prescribed fire management plan developed by the NC Forest Service.
- The upland communities at the nature preserve have a long history of fire management used by landowners, and naturally caused fire was a natural component of these systems for many years until the later part of the 1900's.

To learn more about prescribed fire in North Carolina visit the NC Prescribed Fire Council web site at: www.ncprescribedfirecouncil.org.