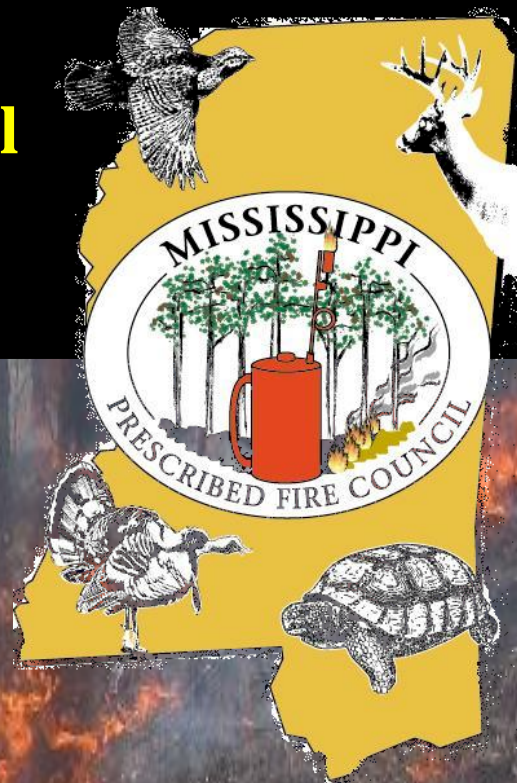


Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council
2010–2014 Strategic Plan



Introduction

Fire has been an integral part of the Southern landscape for centuries. Native Americans used fire for hunting purposes, warfare, and understory brush control. European settlers recognized the benefits of fire and continued the practice. Fire not only shaped Mississippi's native prairies and picturesque pine-grasslands, it formed a deep-rooted culture among its people.

Prescribed burning is one, if not the most, economical and effective land management tools. It helps control undesirable hardwood encroachment, promotes desirable herbaceous and grass growth, and helps recycle nutrients. Moreover, the reduction in fuel loads is a key factor in minimizing wildfire risk. For the wildlife manager, fire is essential in manipulating native plant communities to meet seasonal needs of wildlife.

Today, the absence of fire is glaringly evident in many parts of the Magnolia State. In the 1920s, the ant-fire sentiment was mounting and efforts began to stop the "growing menace of man-caused fires". In September 1928, the American Forestry Association sent the Dixie Crusaders, an organized group of anti-fire zealots, to the South to preach about the "evils" of woods burning and to change the mindset of the Southern fire culture. Other campaigns would follow with now infamous fire prevention slogans and posters. Although erroneous, one cannot argue the effectiveness of these brilliantly waged campaigns. These movements, coupled with increased liability issues and urbanization, have markedly decreased the prevalence of fire on the Southern landscape. For today's land steward, this poses quite the challenge.

To continue using fire as a management tool, its importance must be promoted and its use protected. In many states, prescribed fire councils are one such entity taking on the numerous challenges. These councils bring together those interested in prescribed fire to work for a common goal—prescribed fire promotion. In many states, councils have become *the* leading voice on prescribed fire issues.

The mission of Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council (MPFC) is to partner those with a vested interest in prescribed fire to increase occurrence of burning on public and private lands to restore ecological function, enhance wildlife habitat and plant communities, and reduce hazardous forest or grassland fuel loads. This focused group of natural resource professionals, land managers, and others' objectives are to:

- Promote public awareness about the value and benefits of prescribed fire.
- Protect the ability to use prescribed fire as a management tool.
- Develop expertise in prescribed fire by sharing technical and ecological information.
- Promote safety, training, and research in the art and science of prescribed fire.
- Review prescribed fire practices, regulations, and policy and suggest improvements.
- Promote and facilitate an increase in the number of acres burned annually by prescribed fire in Mississippi.

MPFC Vision

Multiple natural resource entities, consultants, and landowners in Mississippi are dependent on the right to use prescribed fire. MPFC's overall objectives encompass many goals shared by these groups. Thus, a particular charge of MPFC is to provide cohesion among the various interests and coalesce fire advocacy, educational, and training efforts.

To guide efforts, MPFC's Steering Committee developed a 5-year strategic plan. The three MPFC standing committees will be charged with specific objectives and developing means for achievement. A Chair will be elected for each committee to guide meetings and ensure progress. In addition, committees will identify other potential entities to assist in addressing initiatives. Progress reports will be submitted annually to the Steering Committee or as objectives/goals are achieved.

MPFC 5-year Goals

Technical Committee

The Technical Committee is charged with addressing challenges related to prescribed fire practitioners and fire application. It will provide a means of supporting and enhancing certified burn manager and other current and future training programs designed to organize and train responsible, experienced prescribed burners. Charges for 2010-2014 include:

- 1) Assimilate data on the rationale for current burn permit parameters (3.5 m/s transport wind speed; 500 m mixing height). Provide a recommendation to Steering Committee for possible changes.
- 2) Outlining key areas/counties to host the *Introduction to Prescribed Burning Course*.
- 3) Locate additional venues for the Mississippi Prescribed Burning Short Course.
- 4) Review need for a field component of the Prescribed Burning Short Course.
- 5) Review pros and cons of a Certified Prescribed Burner number system and make final recommendation.
- 6) Review need for an advanced prescribed fire course for fire practitioners.
- 7) Identify needs for additional training opportunities or field day components.
- 8) In conjunction with Fire Policy Committee, coordinate a "Weather Summit" with National Weather Service personnel, USFWS, USFS, MFC, etc. to discuss weather forecasting, spot forecasts, etc.

Education and Outreach Committee

The Education and Outreach Committee is charged with developing educational material to promote prescribed fire and MPFC among the general public. Charges for 2010-2014 include:

- 1) Developing list of I&E material to distribute at various natural resource events.
- 2) Developing a "trademark" for prescribed burning similar to that of Smokey Bear.
- 3) Develop a picture tutorial for the MPFC website.
- 4) Develop a promotional video to place on the website and play in various venues.

- 5) Identify existing school programs promoting prescribed fire and determine methods to expand curricula and programs. Locate potential venues for “driving tour” for the public to view the effects and benefits of prescribed fire.
- 6) Increase interaction among the general public, collegiate, natural resource professionals, local, state, and federal partners, and prescribed fire practitioners to share knowledge and technology.

Fire Policy Committee

The Fire Policy Committee would be charged with identifying environmental and regulatory policy issues that could affect the use of prescribed fire and identify methods for providing an active voice as needed. In addition, the committee would work to garner MPFC support and advocate prescribed fire among political groups and policy makers. Charges for 2010-2014 include:

- 1) Reviewing pros and cons of a Prescribed Burner Code of Ethics and making final recommendation.
- 2) Garner support for a Prescribed Fire Awareness Day.
- 3) Develop specific process and identify specific entities and/or individuals for obtaining Board of Supervisor support of county resolutions in all 82 counties (see attached).

Contacts

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Technical Committee

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Education and Outreach Committee

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Fire Policy Committee

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2010-2012 MPFC Steering Committee

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Scott Saucier, *Prescribed Fire Specialist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Judd Brooke, *Private Landowner / Hancock County*

Chauncey Tanner, *Private Landowner / Jasper County*

James Martin, *Research Associate, MS State University*

Joelle Carney, *MS Museum of Natural Science*

Joe Pettigrew, *Forester, Pettigrew Forestry Consultants / Hancock County*

Mark Jamieson, *Assistant Fire Management Officer, U.S. Forest Service*

Tony Wilder, *Fire Management Officer, Zone 7, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

Nicole May, *Forest Fire Planner/Training Officer, U. S. Forest Service*

Glenn Hughes, PhD., *Extension Forestry Professor, MS State Extension Service*

Bryan Kreiter, *TNC Central Gulf Coast Stewardship/Fire Team Manager*

**RESOLUTION
In Support of Prescribed Fire**

_____ County, Mississippi

WHEREAS, prescribed burning is the planned application of fire to naturally occurring vegetative fuels for ecological, silvicultural, agricultural and wildlife management purposes under specified environmental conditions and the following of appropriate precautionary measures which cause the fire to be confined to a predetermined area and accomplishes the planned land management objectives,

WHEREAS, prescribed burning shall not constitute a public or private nuisance when conducted pursuant to state air pollution statutes and rules applicable to prescribed burning,

WHEREAS, the application of prescribed burning is a landowner property right and a land management tool that benefits the safety of the public, the environment, and the economy of Mississippi,

WHEREAS, reducing fuel loads with prescribed burning reduces the risk and severity of major catastrophic wildfire, thereby reducing the threat of loss of life and property, particularly in urbanizing areas,

WHEREAS, prescribed burning is essential to the perpetuation, restoration and management of Mississippi's plant and animal communities and significant loss of the state's biological diversity will occur if fire is excluded from fire-dependent systems,

WHEREAS, prescribed fire assists both public and private land managers in managing game, non-game and endangered wildlife species,

WHEREAS, prescribed fire promotes and protects the forest lands that constitute significant economic, biological and aesthetic resources of statewide importance,

WHEREAS, fire-maintained forests contribute to long-term air and water quality of Mississippi by sequestering carbon and providing other vital ecological benefits,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the _____ County Board of Supervisors supports the appropriate and continued use of prescribed fire in Mississippi,

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the _____ County Board of Supervisors supports the Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council, the Mississippi Forestry Commission and other entities as they continue to provide educational and technical assistance to landowners in an effort to recognize the benefits listed above,

This resolution adopted by this ___ day of _____, 20__