

Release

from the South Carolina Forestry Commission



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Governor proclaims March Prescribed Fire Awareness Month

Official designation brings attention to the many benefits of controlled burning

COLUMBIA—Gov. Henry McMaster has proclaimed March 2018 Prescribed Fire Awareness Month in South Carolina.

A coalition of state, federal and non-governmental land management organizations under the umbrella of the South Carolina Prescribed Fire Council requested the proclamation to raise awareness of the essential role that fire plays in both the stewardship of our natural resources and the protection of lives and property.

Prescribed, or controlled, burning is the skilled application of fire under planned weather and fuel conditions to achieve specific forest and land management objectives. Controlled burning is an ancient practice, notably used by Native Americans for crop management, insect and pest control, and hunting habitat improvement, among other purposes.

The practice continues today under the direction of land managers who understand the appropriate weather conditions, fuel loads and atmospheric conditions for conducting such burns. These carefully applied fires are an important tool to reduce wildfires, enhance wildlife habitat, and keep the nearly 13 million acres of forested land in South Carolina healthy and productive.

While prescribed burning cannot stop all wildfires, it is the best management tool available for preventing larger and more frequent outbreaks. “Prescribed burning is not only the most effective, economical protection against wildfires because it reduces accumulated fuels,” said McMaster in his proclamation, “but it is also a key tool in managing and maintaining the ecological integrity of South Carolina’s woodlands, grasslands, agricultural areas and wildlife habitats.”

Darryl Jones, SCFC Forest Protection Chief, said about 500,000 acres are prescribed-burned every year in South Carolina – most of them on private land – but at least one million acres should be burned annually. “There are so many benefits of prescribed burning,” said Jones. “Not only does it reduce the severity of wildfires, but it also recycles nutrients, stimulates germination of desirable plants, improves wildlife habitat and protects the aesthetic value of our forestlands.”

“Using prescribed fire not only creates healthy functioning ecosystems with plentiful, diverse wildlife populations and healthy, actively growing timber, but benefits our communities by providing economic returns and reducing wildfire risk,” said Lynn Lewis-Weis, chair of the South Carolina Prescribed Fire Council. “The SCPFC appreciates the support of our local and state elected officials in making sure that prescribed fire continues to be a tool that land managers and landowners can use to wisely manage South Carolina’s natural resources to the betterment of all citizens.”



A Forestry Commission land manager conducts a prescribed burn on Harbison State Forest in Columbia.

ATTENTION: MEDIA

As part of the Forestry Commission’s push this March to raise awareness about the benefits of prescribed burning, the agency would like to encourage print and broadcast media to add prescribed burning to their issue budgets and story idea calendars. We will be happy to work with you to coordinate a site visit to a prescribed burn in your area where captivating video footage and one-on-one interviews with burn managers can be captured at the same time.