



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

February 2012

Southern Blue Ridge FLN: Big Burning at Tallulah Gorge

Prescribed burning on the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment has really taken off over the past two years. Forest Service biologist Mike Brod estimates that by the end of this year's winter-spring burn season, they will have treated 60 to 70 percent of their 12,000-acre focal area, Tallulah Gorge, with fire. Some units have been burned more than once.

Brod attributes the partnership's success to a two-year-old MOU that facilitates cooperative burning, and to increased attention to public outreach. The MOU not only allows crews from different agencies to

burn together, it allows for cross-boundary burns. "This way we can be sure to burn all the habitats that require fire. The habitat types we are treating don't follow jurisdictional boundaries," said Brod. Cross-boundary burning is also easier on the land because it allows managers to take better advantage of natural fire breaks, reducing the need for plowed fire breaks.

Brod planned two cooperative burns this year. The first took place on February 8, and treated 720 acres at Tallulah Gorge State Park. The park is a popular tourist destination in the

region and is located along a busy stretch of U.S. Highway 441. Due to the high-profile location, partners assigned a Georgia Department of Natural Resources staffer to be on hand and visit with members of the local community during the burn. The local paper was also notified in advance. The DNR staffer handed out about 50 of the "Fire in the Mountains" brochures created by the FLN and fielded numerous questions—but no complaints.

The second burn is slated for late February or March and will treat another 1,500 acres.



Briefing (left) and ignitions (right) on the February 8 burn; a helicopter was also used for ignitions in some parts of the unit, which encompasses areas of steep terrain



© Mike Brod/USFS

Cooperating Agencies

Georgia Department of Natural Resources—State Parks and Historic Sites Division
Georgia Department of Natural Resources—Wildlife Resources Division, Nongame Conservation Section
Georgia Forestry Commission
Georgia Power
Student Conservation Association
The Nature Conservancy
USDA Forest Service—
Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest (Chattooga River Ranger District)

For more information, contact: Mike Brod (mbrod@fs.fed.us)

The Fire Learning Network is a cooperative program of the Forest Service, Department of the Interior agencies—Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service—and The Nature Conservancy. It has a ten-year track record of helping to restore our nation's forests and grasslands and making communities safer from fire. For more information, contact Lynn Decker at ldecker@tnc.org or (801) 320-0524. *An equal opportunity provider.*

