



Fire Learning Network Notes from the Field

Tugalo Village Burn Benefits Nature and Contributes to Regional Fire Database

Tallulah Gorge, Southern Blue Ridge FLN **January 2013**

Forest Service staff working in the Tallulah Gorge FLN focal area in Georgia burned about a third of the 2,000-acre Tugalo Village unit on January 23, 2013. Mike Brod, wildlife biologist on the Chattooga River District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, had waited nearly three years for a burn window to open in this area. Because this is one of 13 sites across the southern Appalachians that have been designated as a monitoring site for the Southern Blue Ridge FLN, the burn was also important for forest managers and fire ecologists across the region. Results will be compared across all the units, which are managed by a variety of agencies, and will be used by all partners to guide management.

The objectives of the burn included restoring shortleaf pine-oak woodland, improving wildlife habitat and reducing hazardous fuels. Permanent monitoring plots were installed in this unit and sampled in 2010. Immediate post-burn

monitoring data collected by district personnel will document the average burn severity across the plot and help managers assess whether short-term burn objectives were met. During the 2014 growing season, a team of technicians from Forest Stewards, Inc.—which is affiliated with Western Carolina University—will collect vegetation data to assess longer-term effects. Such monitoring data are helping managers across the Southern Appalachian region better understand the effects of prescribed burns on four different fire-adapted ecosystems.

The burn was conducted by Forest Service crews, with representatives from the Southern Research Station (including the director of the Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists) present.



The crew gathers at the end of the burn for an after action review. © Mike Brod/USFS

It typified the landscape-level approach to controlled fire that the Forest Service and its partners are taking in north Georgia. According to Nathan Klaus, senior wildlife biologist for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, “taking a landscape approach to fire has worked really well around Tallulah Gorge. This is great for logistics, ease of burning and it greatly improves firefighter safety. Best of all we know wildlife don’t recognize our artificial borders. When we burn on a landscape level we manage for healthy wildlife populations, improving habitat for many rare and declining species. This partnership has been great for everyone.”

The remainder of the unit will be burned later this winter or spring, as soon as weather allows.

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Participating Agencies & Organizations

Georgia Department of Natural
Resources

Georgia Department of Natural
Resources

Georgia Forestry Commission

North Carolina Division of Forest
Resources

The Nature Conservancy

USDA Forest Service

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