



Prairie Restoration Underway



Fire is a primary force in maintaining healthy prairie ecosystems

Chickasaw National Recreation Area has implemented a plan to reduce eastern red cedar and restore native grasslands in the park, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In the fall and summer of 2010, a contractor used chainsaws to cut eastern red cedar in portions of the park. In February 2011 fire crews began burning the slash. The areas burned in the park this year will return to their natural state of mosaic grasses and savanna, with a combination of grassland and woodland in which trees are widely scattered. Habitat improvement from the fires will contribute to increases in species such as deer and turkey and thereby improve hunting opportunities.



Native grasses are highly adaptive to Oklahoma's climate and will withstand future fires and drought.



Eastern red cedar creates a wildfire hazard, displaces other species from the natural ecosystem, impairs local air quality by producing allergens, and contributes to the general decline of the local water table.



The National Park Service's prescribed fire program helps protect local communities from the catastrophic effects of uncontrolled wildland fires while promoting the natural ecosystem's ability to thrive.



This eastern red cedar reduction project will open up views around the park, improve wildlife habitat, reduce wildfire hazard, conserve water in the Arbuckle Simpson aquifer, and reduce pollen levels.