



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Chickasaw National
Recreation Area

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Chickasaw NRA Prescribed Burn Update March 6, 2011 7pm

Overview: Chickasaw NRA began a series of prescribed fires on Friday, February 18th. The burns will occur at The Point, Nature Center, Five Lakes, and Upper Guy Sandy areas of the park. The prescribed fires will burn slash from thinned eastern red cedar cut during the summer and fall of 2010. Native to Oklahoma, eastern red cedar is extremely invasive. The tree species 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. Under natural conditions eastern red cedar is limited by periodic natural fires. These burns will be the final phase of a multi-month, \$1.4-million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) project.

Current Status: On March 6, fire managers burned the 80 remaining acres in the ESA burn unit near the Nature Center. The entire 165 acre unit has now been treated. The road to Nature Center is still closed temporarily near the low-water crossing and on the south end of the perimeter road for public safety. The Nature Center trails also remain closed temporarily. Firefighters will re-assess the safety of these areas on the morning of Monday, March 7 and will reopen the areas when it is safe to do so.

To date, fire managers have treated approximately 2,046 acres (out of approximately 3,000 total acres that are part of this project). Hot spots within the interior of completed burn units may continue to burn until they receive significant precipitation. Firefighters continue to patrol these areas and take action as needed.

No additional prescribed burns are planned at this time. Fire managers may burn the east side of Hunting burn unit, P14, P15, and the remaining portion of F3 at a later time if conditions are favorable.

Strategy: The project area will be broken up in to small blocks or units to take advantage of a variety of burn windows. The smaller units will allow fire managers to stop or slow or increase the pace of ignitions based upon daily weather conditions. All of the firing will be done using hand ignition methods in order to control the amount of fire on the ground at any one time.

Benefits: Thinning of the eastern red cedar will increase public safety by reducing the hazardous fuel load in the wildland-urban interface and move the ecosystem closer to a natural state. Prescribed fires improve forest health by promoting nutrient recycling, increasing habitat diversity, and reducing fuels that lead to unwanted, out-of-control wildfires. Habitat improvement from the fires will contribute to increases in species such as deer and turkey and thereby improve hunting opportunities. Residents near these burn areas also will benefit because the fuel from dead plant material that has accumulated over the years is reduced under controlled conditions. This significantly reduces the threat a wildfire would pose to people and property in and near the park.

Smoke: Smoke from these prescribed fires may be visible in downtown Sulphur, Davis, Dougherty, Rock Creek, Veterans Lake, Buckhorn areas, Goddard Road, and along Chickasaw Trail but every effort will be made to minimize smoke impacts. Wind direction and upper level mixing of smoke will be utilized in an attempt to eliminate or reduce these inconveniences. Each evening fire managers review forecasts for predicted wind direction and upper level mixing of smoke when determining which unit(s) to burn the following day. Local residents and visitors in the area who are sensitive to smoke or have pre-existing respiratory problems should limit their outdoor activities and keep windows closed during the burn. If you have health problems that will be aggravated by smoke, we encourage you to call the park for further assistance at 580 622-7220.

Safety: Intermittent delays along roadways where firefighters are working may be possible. Please slow down, turn your lights on, and watch for firefighters working along the road. For your safety, please do not stop along the road in the vicinity of the burn.

Fire Information: (580) 622-3165 or www.inciweb.org