



News Release

For more information, contact:

Wendy Burnett

478.751.3535

wburnett@gfc.state.ga.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...FEBRUARY 7, 2017

PRESCRIBED FIRE WEEK MARKS IMPORTANCE OF "GOOD FIRE"

Georgians' awareness about wildfires was raised significantly last fall when fire spread through north Georgia. Governor Nathan Deal has signed a proclamation naming February 5-11, 2016, "Prescribed Fire Awareness Week," which highlights an important land management tool that can lessen wildfire intensity.

"Prescribed fire is actually a good fire," said Georgia Forestry Commission Chief of Protection Frank Sorrells. "It's a natural process, just like rain and sunshine, and our forests need fire to prevent the hazardous buildup of dead plants, vegetation, and timber litter that can lead to devastating wildfires." Prescribed fire is one of the modern principles of wise land stewardship, and is carefully applied by professionals only when weather conditions are ideal for land management goals, neighboring people and roadways.

The US Forest Service works with state agencies and landowners to help citizens understand the immense value of prescribed fire to the environment. The websites GoodFires.org and VisitMyForest.org share information about particulars of the practice, and how it supports forests' ability to give us clean air and water, habitat for wildlife, and places to enjoy nature and outdoor activities. One of the many benefits of prescribed fire is that it encourages new plant growth, which attracts birds and other animals to browse for food.

In 2016, the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) reported 5,046 wildfires statewide, which is 10% above the annual average. Close to 32,000 acres burned, with many of those recorded in north Georgia during the second half of the year. Prescribed burning was carried out on 1.3 million acres last year.

"A prescribed fire typically produces less smoke than a wildfire," explained Georgia Forestry Commission Wildland Fire Specialist Ken Parker. "That's because prescribed fires are carefully planned to meet a particular objective under very specific weather and wind conditions, and are monitored continuously during the burn."



Georgia's spring fire season traditionally brings an increase in fire activity. Though much of the state has received significant rainfall lately, parts of north Georgia remain in a drought. Georgia Forestry Commission firefighters are carefully monitoring conditions and implementing preparation strategies for emergency response if needed.

All Georgians are reminded to be extremely cautious with outdoor fire, and that burn permits are required for outdoor burning. They can be secured at GaTrees.org or by calling 1-888-OK-2-BURN.

For more information about protection from wildfire and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

#