

This developing plan content is under construction and is being shared as a snapshot of thinking. Additional changes based on Forest Service and public input are expected.

Fire

Background

This section is under development. Background to include explanation of WUI, where it occurs on the forest and reciprocal zones (agreements with state and volunteers firefighters).

Desired Conditions

- Wildland fires, both wildfire and prescribed fire, occur on the landscape, creating a mosaic of burned and unburned areas.
- Wildfire that results from natural ignitions (lightning), functions in its natural ecological role as nearly as possible, while life and property (public and private) are protected. Critical resource values, including soil, air, and water quality, are maintained.
- The risk of losing key ecosystem components from the occurrence of high severity wildfire remains relatively low.
- Wildland urban interface areas have a low risk of destructive wildfire. These areas are managed to reduce the risk of loss of human life, enhance protection of nearby homes and improvements, and provide an area where firefighters can safely conduct tactical operations to slow down the spread of a wildfire.
- Prescribed fire is well planned and executed to manage vegetation, restore and maintain fire adapted ecosystems and species, create desired wildlife habitat conditions, and modify uncharacteristic fuel loads to reduce wildfire risk.
- Smoke impacts on adjacent landowners and the public from prescribed burning activities on the Forest are minimal and short-term. Furthermore, the North Carolina Division of Air Quality does not identify any prescribed fire emissions as a significant contributor to any NAAQS exceedance.
- Fine particles released from Forest prescribed fires are not identified as a significant contributor to visibility impairment at any federally mandated Class I area in western North Carolina.

Standards

- Follow the North Carolina Smoke Management Guidelines.
- Utilize atmospheric dispersion modeling to predict air pollution concentrations when populated or sensitive areas could be impacted. Burning can be conducted if the atmospheric dispersion model predicts air pollution concentrations are low enough to protect the public's health and safety.

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- Allow wildfire and prescribed fire to back into the streamside zones to enhance diversity of the area through a mosaic of burned and unburned conditions. In these zones manage fire for low burn severity when possible.
- Firelines which expose mineral soil shall not be located in streamside zones along lakes, perennial or intermittent springs and streams, wetlands, or water-source seeps, unless tying into lakes, streams, or wetlands as firebreaks at designated points with minimal soil disturbance. Low-intensity fires may be allowed to back into the strip along water bodies as long as they do not kill trees and shrubs that shade the stream.
- Follow North Carolina Best Management Practices (BMP) manual fire management guidance to protect water quality, including retaining a duff layer on the soil to allow precipitation to absorb into the ground and minimizing the risk of erosion into a waterbody from fire lines.

Guidelines

- Use existing barriers, e.g. streams, wetlands, roads, and trails, to reduce the need for new fireline construction and to minimize resource impacts.

Management Approaches

- Maintain and restore southern pine forests through prescribed fires that are moderate to high intensity and result in moderate severity conditions.
- Coordinate with State programs, partners and other cooperative opportunities such as the Fire Learning Network to increase capacity for prescribed burning.

See also: [Air](#), [Ecozones](#)

Additional Sources of information:

- North Carolina BMP Manual fire management guidance (NC Division of Forest Resources 2006 or newer)