

## Russell Cave Sees Fire After Years of Suppression Russell Cave National Monument, Alabama National Fire Plan – Fuels Reduction

After decades of fire suppression, the Montague Mountain area of Russell Cave National Monument (Bridgeport, Alabama) was treated with prescribed fire on May 4, 2005. The 350-acre burn unit consisted primarily of oak-hickory forest, with relatively steep topography. The objectives of the burn were to reduce fuel loads, non-native plant cover, and density of small hardwood trees. It is expected that reduction in fuel loading will aid in the increase of herbaceous species cover.



*Firefighters apply prescribed fire in Montague Burn unit at Russell Cave National Monument.  
Photo by Lisa McInnis.*

The cooperation of many National Park Service units was needed in order to complete this project. The Cumberland Gap and Great Smoky Mountains Fire Use Modules, in conjunction with personnel from Russell Cave National Monument, Little River National Preserve, Mammoth Cave National Park, Kings Mountain National Military Park, and the Natchez Trace Parkway conducted the burn. Approximately half of the land in the Montague unit is owned by private individuals who wanted to facilitate fuel reduction on their lands. Agreements and cooperation with adjacent private landowners allowed land managers to burn on a landscape scale, as opposed to burning land fragments on a smaller scale. Such cooperation across boundary lines not only protects people by reducing wildfire risk, but is also ecologically beneficial.



*Fire effects monitor trainee Lisa McInnis observes fire behavior at fire in Montague Burn unit at Russell Cave National Monument.  
Photo by Eric Worthington.*

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