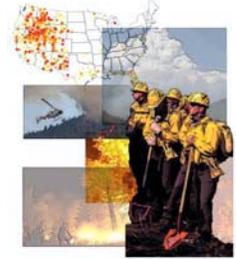


National Fire Plan

6,200-Acre Prescribed Fire



Missouri - USDA Forest Service wildland fire specialists used prescribed fire to restore part of an ecosystem near Big Creek southwest of Ava, Missouri. The 6,200-acre burn was the largest prescribed burn ever done on Mark Twain National Forest and was funded by the National Fire Plan.

Wildland fires occurred naturally every three to four years on the glades in southwest Missouri prior to 1900 when Europeans settled in the area. Native glade and savanna ecosystems depend on fire to maintain and enhance wildlife diversity, control invasive woody species, and reduce the amount of dead material on the ground. If the amount of dead material on the ground builds up, an uncontrolled wildland fire may burn too hot and destroy all the vegetation.

In 2001, the forest bought a helicopter with National Fire Plan money and trained a fire crew in using helicopters to fight fires and ignite prescribed fires. This crew was instrumental in completing the 6,200-acre burn.

The helicopter can cover a large area over rough terrain in a short amount of time. This eliminates the need for firefighters to enter the interior area to ignite the prescribed fire. Instead, the helicopter has a dispenser that injects an activator agent into small ping-pong ball size balls containing a flammable chemical. The balls falls to the ground, and in about 20 seconds, a chemical reaction occurs and the ball ignites. As a safety precaution, the helicopter has a water bucket that holds 210 gallons of water.

For additional information on the National Fire Plan, visit www.fireplan.gov