

## Community at Risk and Scrub Jays Benefit from Interagency Efforts Canaveral National Seashore, Florida National Fire Plan – Fuels Reduction

Canaveral National Seashore used prescribed fire to successfully treated 556 acres of imperiled Florida coastal scrub in early 2005. The Bill's Hill Prescribed Fire was the National Park Service's first large scale attempt to reduce the threat of fire in this area. Oak Hill, a community at risk from wildland fire, benefited from this successful fuels reduction project. The residential area has been repeatedly threatened by wildfires, most notably in 1998. Prior to the prescribed fire, National Park Service staff contacted each local resident and provided information on this fire management project. This public relations effort was well received and the community supported this cooperative effort.

The Bill's Hills area is a fire-dependent ecosystem and home to several federal and state listed species. With an altered fire regime, the understory of the slash pine flatwoods has become dense with saw palmetto and scrub oak. The reduction in fuels will also improve habitat for resident populations of bald eagle, scrub jay, gopher tortoise and indigo snake. In addition, restoration of rare plants is expected and plant diversity will increase throughout the system.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge provided staff and equipment and worked closely with Canaveral National Seashore in the planning and implementation stages of the Bill's Hill Prescribed Fire. The fire effects team from Everglades National Park established a long-term fire effects monitoring plan and will continue to sample permanent plots. An additional 532 acres in Bill's Hill are scheduled to be treated in 2006, and more fire effects plots will be installed prior to the upcoming burn season. Interagency cooperation in planning and conducting this fuels treatment was exceptional and will continue for future projects.

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*Pre-burn (top image; dated 12/9/2004) and post-burn (bottom image; dated 3/23/2005) photo points in Bill's Hill burn unit at Canaveral National Seashore. Photos by Shanna Ramsey.*