

## Horseshoe Bend Initiates Prescribed Burning Program Horseshoe Bend National Military Park, Alabama National Fire Plan – Rehabilitation

On April 10, 2006, Horseshoe Bend National Military Park's implemented their first prescribed burn. The park's prescribed fire program was initiated in 2002 by the park's previous Superintendent Mark Lewis. Superintendent Lewis authored the park's first Fire Management Plan, which was finalized in March of 2003. A fire break was constructed along the entire park boundary in FY-04, paid for by National Fire Plan hazard fuel reduction funds. In FY-05, a burn plan was contracted and approved. Weather conditions caused rescheduling of the burn until FY-06.



*Fire moves through litter layer along park boundary. NPS Photo by Jim Cahill.*

As the 2006 burn window approached, Horseshoe Bend's burn plan garnered interest from Auburn University's College of Forestry. The University had been conducting baseline studies on native Mountain Longleaf Pine at Horseshoe Bend. Questions arose about the effects of fire on longleaf pine in a fire deprived environment. Little research had been done on this subject, and Auburn Researchers Dr. Sharon Herman and Dr. John Kush were interested in studying how fire would effect the regeneration of a native longleaf pine population. In particular, with excessive duff and forest litter, mountain longleaf feeder roots rise to the surface subjecting the roots to fire damage. Discussions between Auburn and the Southeast Regional Fire Ecologist, Caroline Noble, yielded a slightly modified burn plan. The plan called for reducing fuel loads while prudently removing duff layers surrounding longleaf pine stands.



*The grass stage of a longleaf pine was protected during fuel reduction. NPS Photo by Amanda Callis*

The actual burn was conducted in mid-April. The Cumberland Gap and Great Smoky Mountains Fire Use Modules, along with an engine crew from Kings Mountain National Military Park and local Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) cooperators worked together to successfully treat 285 acres with prescribed fire.

With the continued cooperation of the fire and academic community, Horseshoe Bend is looking forward to a successful fire management program that will reduce fuels build-up while allowing for the natural re-generation of a the longleaf pine--a species that is important enough to be the "State Tree" of Alabama.

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