

## Prescribed Fire Helps Maintain Historic Landscape Vicksburg National Military Park, Mississippi National Fire Plan – Fuels Reduction

Prescribed fire is a valuable management tool which is used to help restore and maintain the historic landscape at Vicksburg National Military Park. On March 2, 2006, the park implemented an eighteen acre prescribed burn. Four burn units were treated. One of the units is on a westward facing bluff and exposed to prevailing winds. This site was thus drier than the others, and fire carried particularly well. The other three burn units did not burn as thoroughly. They are located in more protected, low-lying terrain, and an early onset of spring green growth hindered the fire's spread. However, park staff were still pleased with the results since any amount of burning was better than having none at all. The burn was conducted in partnership with fire management staff from Natchez Trace Parkway. The burn was conducted in partnership with fire management staff from Natchez Trace Parkway and Natchez National Historic Park.



Vicksburg NMP encompasses 1,800 acres adjacent to the community of Vicksburg, Mississippi, which was the focus of a forty-seven day Union siege during the Civil War. Today two-thirds of the historic battlefield consists of mixed-hardwood forest, with a predominant oak species overstory. The other third of the park is maintained in an historically open condition, reflecting the clear line of fire the opposing armies had in 1863. Left untreated, these open vistas fill in with tall grass, brush, and eventually saplings and trees. For this reason prescribed burns (along with mechanical treatments such as bush hogging) are used to maintain a historic scene. The terrain at Vicksburg NMP can be very steep in places, and fire is considered to be a safer method for clearing away brush than mowers, which have overturned in the past.



*Use of prescribed fire at Fort Hill in Vicksburg NMP prevents the encroachment of woody species into the historically open view. NPS Photo.*

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