

## Three Objectives, One of the Tools: Prescribed Fire Shenandoah National Park, Virginia National Fire Plan – Fuels Reduction

The objectives: vista maintenance, exotic plant control and keeping woody plants from encroaching upon a meadow. In March, fire managers lit and contained three different prescribed fires towards meeting those objectives. They monitored each burn for fire effects and adjusted control strategies appropriately. In all, staff treated over 125 acres at Hogwallow Flats Overlook, Pumpkin Hill and Big Meadows.

Hogwallow Flats is one of 75 overlooks along Shenandoah's Skyline Drive. The Drive runs near the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains for 105 miles. Along the way, overlooks offer views of the park itself, the Shenandoah Valley and other Appalachian ranges to the west, and Virginia's piedmont to the east. Prescribed fires, along with mowing and limited herbicide applications are used to ensure that vegetation does not obstruct views.

Pumpkin Hill is at park headquarters in the Valley near Luray, Virginia. Invasive, exotic plants are abundant and dedicated to their own survival, often outcompeting native species. A hot prescribed burn kills or weakens the non-native plants. Herbicide applications will follow the treatment by fire to reduce the number of exotics.

Big Meadows is a unique ecosystem within the park, as well as an historic landscape. Fire is a means to maintain it, to help keep woody plants at bay and encourage herbaceous native species to thrive.

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*View of Pumpkin Hill Prescribed Fire  
from Skyline Drive - March 2006. NPS  
photo by Jeff Martinelli.*