



Craig's Pond Prescribed Fire Partnership Region 8 Savannah River Forest 2007

Project Description:

On April 22, 2007 a public—private partnership including the Craig's Pond Scientific Advisory Committee, Craig's Pond Eco-Education Committee, the University of South Carolina-Aiken, University of Georgia, Clemson University, College of Charleston, the South Carolina Forestry Commission, Chem/Nuclear Energy Solutions, Ferrel Environmental Services, the Department of Energy, and the US Forest Service completed a 165 acre prescribed fire of Craig's Pond, a South Carolina Heritage Preserve located on the edge of the Savannah River Site. The prescribed burn was a major milestone following years of efforts on the part of all partners to bring about the conservation of native Carolina Bay plant and animal species on this critical site.

Craig's Pond is a Carolina Bay on the edge of the Savannah River Site (SRS) approximately 4 miles north of Snelling, SC. The bay is dissected by the SRS property line; the North 1/3 of the bay falling within the Savannah River Site, the South 2/3 is owned by Chem/Nuclear Energy Solutions, a commercial low-level radioactive waste disposal company. The private side of the bay is managed by Chem-Nuclear/Energy Solutions and the Craig's Pond Scientific Advisory Committee. In 2005 Craig's Pond was officially designated as a South Carolina Heritage Preserve by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. The bay is available for research study and for educational use by schools and other public groups. Threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) plant species inhabit Craig's Pond (including nine plants and three animals) but were in decline as a result of hazardous fuels accumulation and woody plant competition.

Multiple benefits for conservation management of Craig's Pond included the following:

- Improved habitat for numerous species in the forested wetland transition zone and the Bay meadow, including at least nine TES plants such as *Lobelia boykinii* and *Rhexia aristosa* that have been in decline for decades.
- Reduced hazardous fuels to minimize the potential for a catastrophic wildfire as only limited prescribed burning has occurred over the last 50 years or more in and around this bay.
- Developed a mutual conservation strategy including the demonstrated use of prescribed fire as a critical tool to restore native species and communities at Craig's Pond.

Implementation Plan and Accomplishment to Date

- Prescribed fire was applied to 165 acres of Craig's Pond and the surrounding area in a collaborative manner for the first time in 2007.
- The success of this endeavor has assured future cooperative periodic applications of prescribed fire to continue to help restore the native species of this Carolina Bay.
- Approximately 15 Forest Service employees and 5 community representatives participated in the prescribed burn. Over 50 public, private, corporate and community participants were involved in the planning of this event and will continue to plan future collaborations.
- Of additional importance is the partnership's ability to accomplish a significant project on adjoining public and private lands that lie on the secure boundary of a DOE nuclear weapons materials facility. Accomplishment of this first boundary project in conjunction with our neighbors has opened the door for possible future collaborations with other neighbors who share our concern with hazardous fuels accumulation on both sides of the fence.

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Preparations Along Security Fence



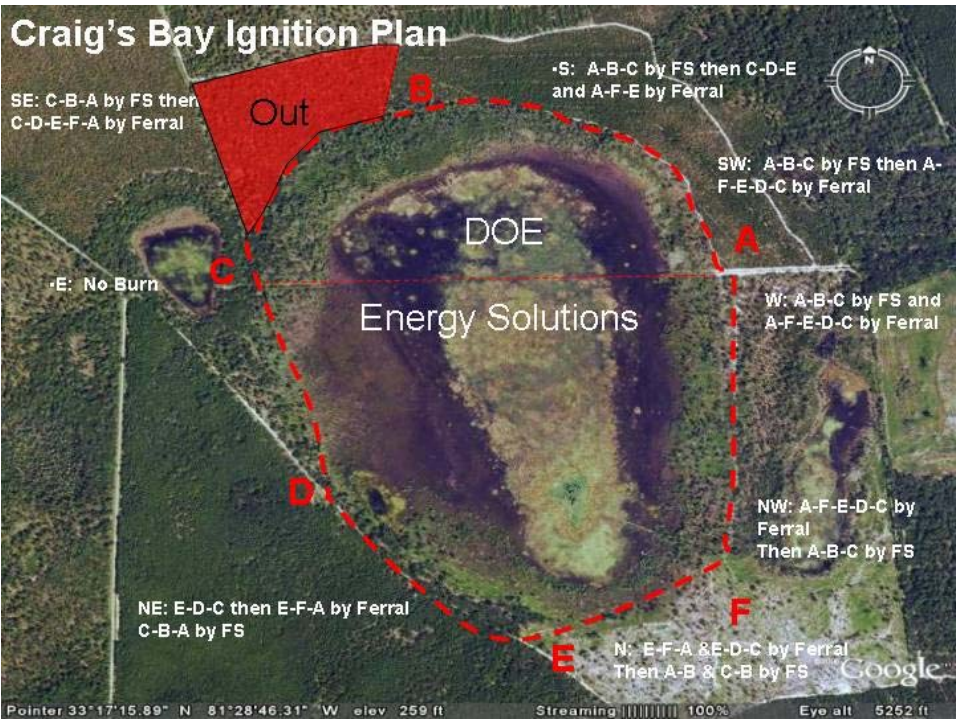
Ignition showing the Center of Craig's Bay



Fire Behavior within the Bay Meadow



Fire Behavior with the Forested Ecotone



Craig's Bay Ignition Plan Map