



CONTROLLED BURNS:



Controlled burns, also known as prescribed fires, are a method of land management that involves the intentional ignition of fires after training and under carefully monitored conditions.

Generally, we think of a forest fire as a negative occurrence yet there is a difference: wildfires or uncontrolled fires result in negative outcomes and controlled burns are an essential tool used by ecologists, foresters, and land managers to maintain

healthy ecosystems and reduce the risk of uncontrolled wildfires.

One of the most significant benefits of controlled burns is their ability to prevent large, destructive wildfires. By periodically burning off excess vegetation, controlled burns help reduce the buildup of “fuel” - dry leaves, dead trees, and other organic matter that can fuel massive fires. This reduction in fuel load makes it more difficult for wildfires to spread uncontrollably and cause widespread destruction to forests, homes, and wildlife.

Many plant and animal species have adapted to fire and depend on it for survival. For example, certain pine species, require fire to open their cones and release seeds. Additionally, controlled burns can create diverse habitats by clearing out overgrown brush, allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor and encouraging the growth of native grasses and flowers. This, in turn, supports a variety of wildlife, from insects to large mammals, by providing food and shelter.

Invasive plant species can quickly take over an ecosystem, outcompeting native plants and disrupting local biodiversity. Controlled burns can be an effective method of managing these invasives, as fire can selectively target and reduce their populations while allowing fire-adapted native plants to thrive. By controlling invasive species, prescribed burns help maintain the ecological balance necessary for a healthy and sustainable environment.

Fire also returns valuable nutrients to the soil by breaking down organic matter into ash, which acts as a natural fertilizer. This process helps enhance soil quality and promotes the growth of

new vegetation. Nutrient-rich soil supports plant health, which in turn benefits herbivores and the entire food chain.

Many ecosystems evolved with periodic fires, and the suppression of natural wildfires has led to an unnatural accumulation of vegetation. This buildup not only increases the risk of catastrophic wildfires but also disrupts ecological processes. Controlled burns help restore natural fire cycles, maintaining the resilience of ecosystems that depend on periodic fire disturbances.

By mitigating the risks of severe wildfires, controlled burns also protect human communities and infrastructure. When wildfires are less severe, fewer resources are needed for firefighting efforts, reducing costs for local governments and taxpayers. Additionally, healthier forests and grasslands can support industries such as tourism, recreation, and agriculture, providing economic benefits to communities that rely on natural landscapes.

At Stable View, approximately 800 conserved acres have undergone controlled burns in recent years as the longleaf pine ecosystem has been reestablished. Maintaining a healthy ecosystem ensures proper habitats for species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, which recently moved up from the endangered to the threatened list.

In Fall of 2024, several employees at Stable View attended the Certified Prescribed Fire Manager (CPFM) class offered by The South Carolina Forestry Commission. This program educates how to create a burn plan and safely monitor smoke management

using weather conditions after calculating the fuel load on the parcel of land while remaining compliant with local and federal laws.

***It is not advised that one attempt a controlled burn without the South Carolina CPFM. To learn more about controlled burns or to sign up for the Certified Prescribed Fire Manager class, please visit The South Carolina Forestry Commission's website:
<https://www.scfc.gov/>**