



Ecosystem Restoration Team Assists with Prescribed Fire at North Florida National Wildlife Refuge

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is a national collaborative effort to bring a broad cross-section of stakeholders together to address wildland fire management challenges. The Strategy directs wildland fire planning activities and has three primary goals: restore and maintain landscapes, develop Fire-Adapted Communities, and improve wildfire response.

Activity	Impact
# acres burned in prescribed fire	341

Ecosystem Restoration Teams help restore a variety of forested ecosystems by conducting prescribed burns and other restoration activities. Often, these teams provide the needed human power, resources, and expertise to complete restoration tasks that may not otherwise happen due to lack of state or federal resources or capacity. Most Florida parks and National Wildlife Refuges contain fire-adapted ecosystems and require prescribed fire to maintain ecosystem health, but timing between the right weather conditions and available human power are not always available.

In January 2015, Wildlife Restoration International, Inc. (WRI) launched their first Florida-based, year-round Ecosystem Restoration Team. Based in Gainesville, Florida, WRI is staffed and equipped to work in Northeast Florida and beyond. WRI's Northeast Florida Team adds crucial prescribed fire assistance that increases capacity on conservation lands.

The Lower Suwanee National Wildlife

Refuge fire crew first burned with WRI at Manatee Springs State Park, where Refuge staff regularly assist on cooperative burns through an interagency MOU. While at this burn, WRI indicated their availability to assist on an upcoming Refuge burn.

The Lower Suwanee National Wildlife Refuge is a 55,000 acre refuge along the Suwannee River that provides habitat for native and migratory species and promotes native forest regeneration and management, especially of the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem. Prescribed fire is essential to manage longleaf ecosystems. On March 8., 2016, with a perfect forecast but lack of available Refuge staff, WRI filled a crucial role in helping conduct a burn on 341 acres at the Refuge by supplying a type 6 engine and a well-qualified and experienced crew. Their professional assistance was invaluable in completing a high priority burn for habitat restoration and hazardous fuel reduction on the Lower Suwanee National Wildlife Refuge - Compartment 1B. Following the prescribed fire, the Refuge received a

Success stories highlight regional wildland fire accomplishments that support implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy in the Southeast. The stories demonstrate how the Southeast is improving its "fire resiliency" through technology, education and outreach, forest management, collaboration, and more. Success stories also serve as a model for other communities to follow.

call for assistance to help suppress an escaped prescribed fire at nearby Cedar Key Scrub State Reserve. WRI, along with a contingent of US Fish Wildlife Service fire resources, was able to assist with the fire escape on the nearby state property, helping contain it within a few hours to 27 acres with minimal damage to park and private natural resources and no damage to structures.



Anthony DiMaggio, FWS Burn Boss with Josh Merkel and Matthew Brody (WRI) and Josh Havird (FWS). Credit: Sam Matelski, US Fish and Wildlife Service



Sam Matelski, FWS Firefighter ignites a prescribed burn on the Lower Suwannee NWR with assistance from WRI (Wildland Restoration International). Credit: Vic Doig, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Additional Information:

Wildland Restoration International, Inc.: <http://wildlandrestoration.org>

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/lower_suwannee/

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Partners: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildland Restoration International, Inc.



Southern Regional
Extension Forestry

