



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
Total acres burned	14,668

Large Partnership Prescribed Burn at the Flint Rock Preserve

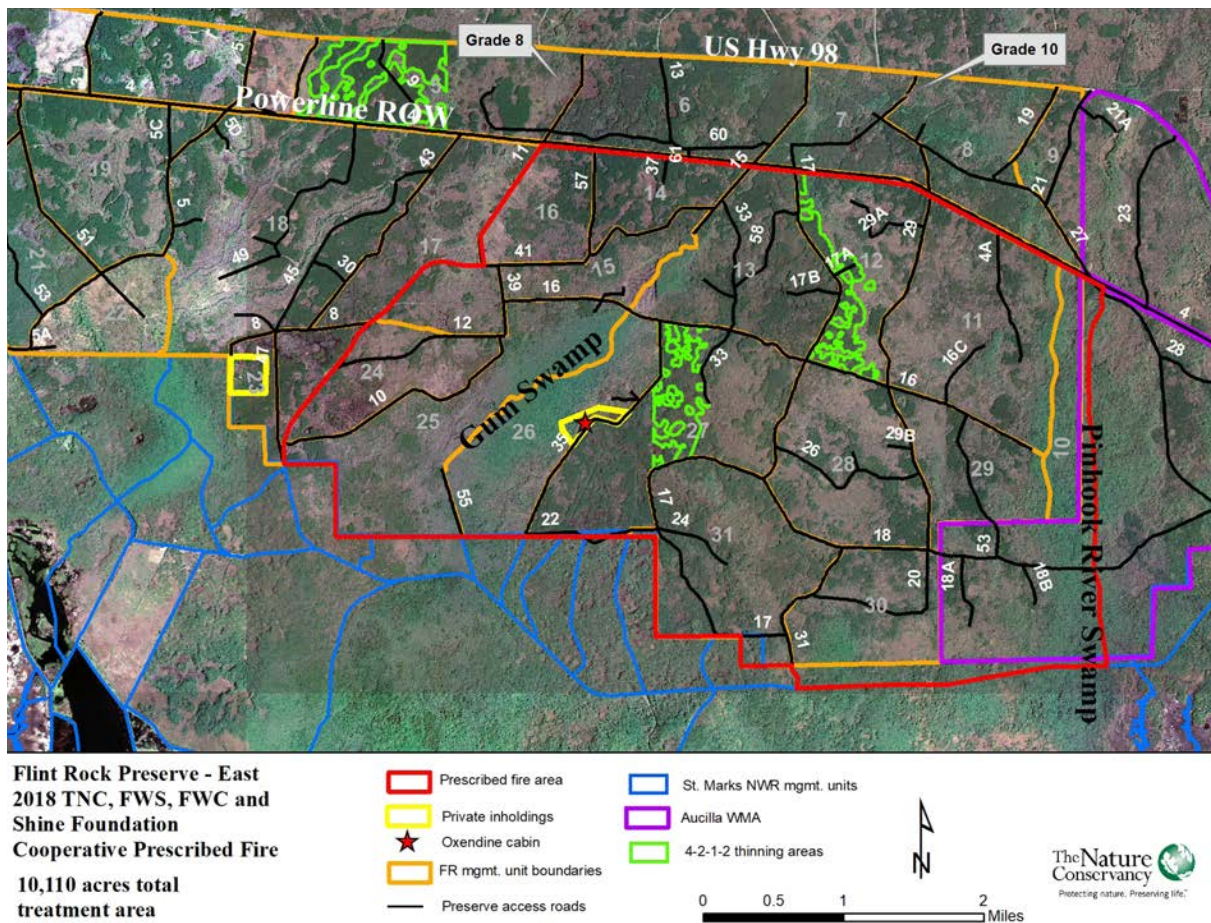
Project Overview

During February and March 2018, two large prescribed burns totaling 14,668 acres occurred across private, state and federal ownership boundaries in southern Jefferson and Wakulla counties, Florida. The sites include longleaf pine mesic flatwoods and forested wetlands. The majority of the burning occurred on the Flint Rock Preserve which suffered from fire exclusion for at least 50 years prior to 2011. Since 2011, all management units within the Flint Rock Preserve have been burned; however, fuel loading was still exceptionally high prior to this year’s efforts.

To safely prepare for large burns such as these, much planning and pre-burn work must be completed. Downwind fuel breaks were established by recent burns on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Organizers ensured sufficient staff and equipment were available on the proposed burn days and proper weather and fuel moisture indicators were within prescription. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service (USFWS) contracted helicopter was used to ignite and monitor the burn, while ground support was in place to contain the burn. Six USFWS and seven Nature Conservancy wildland firefighters participated in execution, monitoring and mop up.

Property owners involved in the burn are part of the collectively managed Flint Rock Preserve, which include the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Aucilla River Wildlife Management Area, The Nature Conservancy, Sam Shine Foundation and other small, private inholdings. The Preserve is managed by The Nature Conservancy, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the USFWS and occurs within the boundaries of the Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance Longleaf Implementation Team (ARSA LIT) area. The boundary for the ARSA LIT includes the Apalachicola River watershed, but also extends east and west to the Aucilla and Choctawhatchee Rivers and north across the Georgia and Alabama state lines. The ARSA LIT 10-year Longleaf Conservation Plan aims to improve the



quality and increase the quantity of ecological prescribed burning, as well as better understand canopy conversion in competitive ecosystems like mesic flatwoods. Each of the southern region's seventeen LITs work to advance America's Longleaf Pine Restoration Initiative.

This burn was made possible by the cooperative efforts of ARSA. Within this alliance, partners work together to accomplish large or specific tasks that are difficult for one partner to accomplish alone. They work together to carry out restoration work, ensure best management practices (BMPs) occur for a timber sale, conduct large prescribed fires, and more.

The Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance has been around since 2000 but formalized their agreement with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2010. The MOU enables resources to be shared and work to occur across jurisdictional boundaries. Primary ARSA partners include USDA Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center, Northwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Forest Service, Florida State Parks, and the US Department of Defense and Tall Timbers Research Station. This partnership approach has impressed national and regional conservation funders, receiving over \$1.75 million in grants for habitat improvements of threatened species and Longleaf pine forest improvements.

Lessons Learned

Ensure proper planning occurs to carry out large burns. Essential planning activities should include: (1) understanding where critical hold concerns (fire lines) are or places where the fire may cross boundaries and threaten lives or private property; (2) making sure equipment and staff are available; (3) ensuring swamp areas are wet enough to burn; (4) knowing safe weather and atmospheric conditions; and (5) planning for smoke to remain off of roads and highways.

Support of the Cohesive Fire Strategy

This incident supports the national Cohesive Fire Strategy goals of *maintaining and promoting resilient landscapes* (landscape level burns made possible through partnership). The partnership also supports the Cohesive Fire Strategy's Southeast Regional Action Plan through:

- Utilizing best burning practices (Task 6.C.3);
- Encouraging planning efforts across landscapes between practitioners and land managers to address wildland fire, landscape resiliency and community safety while balancing other concerns and emphasizing plan development in high risk areas (1.2.1);
- Coordinating management activities, including fuels reduction projects and prescribed burning, between public land and adjacent private landowners to maximize placement of risk reduction strategies (2.D.3);
- Supporting efforts to increase prescribed burning for ecosystem restoration (e.g., SERPPAS efforts for Longleaf pine restoration) (1.1.7);
- Promoting and using fire to emulate natural disturbance patterns to maintain and improve ecological systems, balancing social, cultural, and economic needs, especially over large contiguous landscapes (1.1.1); and
- Supporting and expanding landscape level collaborative efforts (3.A.4).



Multi-agency prescribed fire at Flint Rock Preserve in Wakulla and Jefferson Counties, Florida. Credit: David Printiss, The Nature Conservancy



ARSA partners post-burn, including staff from The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Credit: David Printiss, The Nature Conservancy

Additional Resources:

Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance Longleaf Implementation Team (ARSA LIT): <http://www.americaslongleaf.org/news/news-articles/local-implementation-team-updates-spring-2016/apalachicola-regional-stewardship-alliance-arsa-update/>

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/st_marks/

Aucilla River Wildlife Management Area: <http://myfwc.com/viewing/recreation/wmas/lead/aucilla/>

America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative: www.americaslongleaf.org

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Partners: The Nature Conservancy, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sam Shine Foundation, Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance



Southern Regional
Extension Forestry

