

SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PRESCRIBED BURNING AT THE WILDLAND–URBAN INTERFACE

D. Wade¹

USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station, 320 Green Street, Athens, GA 30602

J. Brenner, J. Anderson, H. Graham, S. Goodrick, R. Gorden, M. Hebb, J. Kern, and M. Kuypers
Florida Division of Forestry, 3125 Conner Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32399

S. Miller

St. Johns River Water Management District, P.O. Box 1429, Palatka, FL 32178

K. Mousel

Florida Division of Forestry, 3125 Conner Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32399

T. Proctor

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 1843 Tamiami Trail, Osprey, FL 34229

D. Voltolina

Florida Division of Forestry, 3125 Conner Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32399

ABSTRACT

The intentional use of fire adjacent to urban areas is much more difficult than burning in more rural areas. Numerous modifications in planning and execution are required. This paper describes some of the adjustments Florida fire managers have learned to make, most of which will hold throughout the southern United States and beyond. Public relations, political considerations, and strict compliance with all legal requirements are even more important because of increased public scrutiny. Smoke management concerns are intensified and relate to both the convection column and drift smoke from residual combustion.

Additional safety ramifications include both the increased risk to the public if the burn goes awry, and the increased danger to fire personnel from unexpected and/or dangerous trash in burn units. Selection of firing technique, and ignition pattern and rate are more involved. The burning window is likely to be substantially reduced because of the need for a more restrictive range in weather parameters. Increased suppression capability, additional contingency planning, and tightened mop-up standards all add complexity. Cooperation with fire departments and knowledge of Class A foam and Barracade™ become mandatory. Burning along the wildland–urban interface thus requires increased commitment and skill to be successful. It also provides an opportunity for fire managers to demonstrate that the public trust placed in them to safely manage Florida's natural resources is well founded. The Florida Division of Forestry is currently developing a training course that incorporates these modifications to enhance the ability of experienced prescribed burners to conduct interface burns.

Citation: Wade, D., J. Brenner, J. Anderson, H. Graham, S. Goodrick, R. Gorden, M. Hebb, J. Kern, M. Kuypers, S. Miller, K. Mousel, T. Proctor, and D. Voltolina. 2004. Some considerations when prescribed burning at the wildland–urban interface [abstract]. Page 318 in R.T. Engstrom, K.E.M. Galley, and W.J. de Groot (eds.). Proceedings of the 22nd Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference: Fire in Temperate, Boreal, and Montane Ecosystems. Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee, FL.

¹ Present address: Rx Fire Doctor, LLC, 640 High Meadows Drive, Hayesville, NC 28904.