

# A SUMMARY OF FIRE MANAGEMENT ON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES IN THE SOUTHEAST: 1980 TO 2008

Susan L. Wilder

Southeast Region Fire Management Branch, USFWS, Lacombe, LA

Peter Kubiak

Southeast Region Fire Management Branch, USFWS, Atlanta, GA

David Brownlie

Southeast Region Fire Management Branch, USFWS, Tallahassee, FL

## ABSTRACT

The Southeast Region has served as a leader in the use of prescribed fire within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for >60 years, with the first prescribed burn occurring on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in 1940. Today nearly 7,000 prescribed fires have been conducted on approximately 70 national wildlife refuges within the Southeast Region over the past 20 years. Approximately 30% of the prescribed burn treatments have occurred during the growing season (1 April to 31 October), achieving both hazardous fuel reduction and biological objectives. In addition to the application of prescribed fire on refuge lands, wildfires have also occurred with > 3,000 wildfires reported throughout the region. In total, there are > 10,000 fire records across 101 national wildlife refuges within the Southeast Region that have been reported since 1980. All reports are deposited in the National Fire Management Information System Database (FMIS) as either wildfire, prescribed or other fuel treatments (chemical or mechanical). The objective of this study is to analyze the amount of fire (prescribed or wildfire) that has occurred on refuge lands within the Southeast Region over the past 20+ years based on FMIS fire records. It describes the fire management program in the Southeast Region and includes an analysis of the size, seasonality, objectives, and general considerations and limitations of fire management on refuge lands as well as how management has changed over time. The purpose of this project is to present an overall summary of the last 28 years of one of the leading and most successful federal prescribed fire management programs in the Southeast Region.

*Keywords:* fire management, fuel treatments, national wildlife refuges, prescribed fire, wildfires.

*Citation:* Wilder, S.L., P. Kubiak, and D. Brownlie. 2010. A summary of fire management on national wildlife refuges in the Southeast: 1980 to 2008 [abstract]. Page 43 in K.M. Robertson, K.E.M. Galley, and R.E. Masters (eds.). Proceedings of the 24th Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference: The Future of Prescribed Fire: Public Awareness, Health, and Safety. Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee, Florida, USA.