



We're about to look a little different at Big Haynes Creek Nature Center. That's because we recently partnered with the Georgia Forestry Commission to conduct a scheduled prescribed fire in the wetlands area.

Here's a FAQ sheet to help our visitors understand the benefits of this practice and our commitment to the health of our wildlife in this conservation area!

What is Prescribed Fire?

Prescribed fire is the planned, deliberate and controlled application of fire as a land management tool. Prescribed fire's use improves the land's health and provides for the renewal of vegetation and wildlife. These fires are ignited under specific weather conditions, with sufficient resources, including trained personnel and suppression equipment, to achieve specific land management objectives.

Why is it Needed?

National Forest ecosystems require not only sun, rain, and wind, but also another NATURAL force...Fire...to maintain their natural, healthy balance. Prescribed fire:

- Reduces the potential for catastrophic damage of wildfires by reducing the accumulation of hazardous fuels like leaves, twigs, pine cones, branches, etc.
- Rejuvenates soil nutrients, encouraging new growth of grasses, plants and trees Increases the diversity of plants, trees and animals while inhibiting the spread of non-native invasive species.
- Improves wildlife habitat by increasing food quality, quantity and availability. Deer, quail and wild turkey are some of the species that greatly benefit from prescribed burning.
- Reduces the amount of carbon released by factories, vehicles and other sources by protecting the large trees that store carbon.

Is Prescribed Fire Safe?

- Prescribed burns are only ignited when wind, humidity and other weather conditions are within pre-determined ranges.
- Specially trained fire crews, utilizing appropriate firefighting equipment and techniques are in charge of carrying out the prescribed burning operation.
- Favorable smoke directions are modeled based on weather predictions from the National Weather Service in order to avoid heavier populated areas. If the winds are predicted to impact a sensitive area, the burn is postponed.
- If any of these factors are out of the stated parameters, the operation is cancelled until the right conditions are present. During prescribed burns, firefighters monitor the burn carefully to ensure it stays within control lines.
- Smoke from a prescribed fire is significantly less than that from an out of control wildfire.