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The Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils: Partnering to Promote Understanding of Prescribed Fire, and Address Management, Policy, and Regulatory Issues

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Abstract

As North America continues to experience rapid changes in land use and demographics, and to suffer from the resulting loss and degradation of ecosystems and landscapes, prescribed fire managers face increasingly complex challenges that limit or threaten the use of this ancient conservation tool. Across the continent, common prescribed fire issues related to public health and safety, ecological stewardship, liability, public education, air quality regulation and the wildland urban interface (WUI) concern the prescribed fire community. Networking existing state and provincial prescribed fire councils' efforts is proving synergistic in increasing communication, effectiveness of public education, participation in fire policy decisions, and representation in forums dealing with regional, national and international regulatory issues. In November 2006, a diverse group of private, federal and state agency, and non-governmental organization leaders agreed to form an overarching umbrella prescribed fire organization to facilitate formation of new fire councils, to serve as a repository for fire information and expertise, to provide a forum for discussion of current issues, and to speak as a unified voice for member councils. They chose to call this organization the National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils, and developed a strategic plan that includes a mission statement, purpose, goals, and plan of action. This Scoping Committee is pleased to announce formation of the inaugural Board of Directors, which comprises 9 members, each with an enviable track record and national reputation. Board members come from across the country and will meet 3-5 November 2008 to take over the reins from the Scoping Committee, peruse draft documents developed by the various interim committees, and tackle the tasks associated with making the Coalition relevant and effective, including incorporation, staffing issues, and funding sources. The Board realizes it has to work quickly if it is to effectively serve the needs of the state fire councils, as the number of states having such councils has grown from five in 2006, to 21 as of 1 October 2008, with some states having multiple councils. These 21 states represent 12 million acres of annual prescribed fire. The National Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils already serves on regional, national and international platforms and looks forward to expanding its efforts to ensure that the ecological values and other public benefits of prescribed fire are secure for the future.

Influences of Fire Seasonality and Legumes upon Soil Processes in Young Longleaf Pine Plantations

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Abstract

Approximately 100,000 hectares of longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris* Mill.) plantations have been established on former agricultural sites in the southern USA in the past decade, many if not most with a primary objective for wildlife management using prescribed fire. Restoration goals for productive longleaf pine ecosystems with quality wildlife habitat include the need for reintroduction of prescribed fire and for development of a groundcover of native grasses and forbs. This study examines the long-term effects of dormant and growing season burning on soil nitrogen (N) in fourteen year-old stands of longleaf, factorialized with and without N_2-fixing native legumes. Total N, soil organic N, and soil and pine foliar $\delta^{15}N$ will be assessed over time to detect responses to N loss via burning and N additions via fixation. However, it may be problematic to follow fates of fixed N due to variability and isotopic ^{15}N fractionation of residual fertilizers, N in trees, or of residual N left after burning. Although most sites initially have some residual fertility, soils are generally highly depleted in both organic matter and total N relative to mature native longleaf woodland soils. The soil pretreatment $\delta^{15}N$ profile at 0-10, 10-20, and 20-30 cm increases with depth with means of 5.6, 6.8 and 7.5 respectively. Pine foliage (-3), and litter (-3.3) $\delta^{15}N$ values from the plantations only vary slightly from native woodlands. Legume foliar $\delta^{15}N$ values range from -.5 to -1.8. Measures of soil $\delta^{15}N$ may provide a useful technique for assessing changes in soil and vegetation pools of N from pines and legumes with restoration and burning treatments over time.