

Media Alert
Date: 11-14-99

Contact: Frances Nevill, Public Relations Manager
The Nature Conservancy, 407-682-3664 x129

Reporters Invited to Gear Up for Prescribed Burn

In advance preparation for the Spring, 2000 fire season, The Nature Conservancy, Volusia County Fire Services, and the Bunnell district office of the Florida Division of Forestry (DOF) are conducting a prescribed fire demonstration burn for media representatives near the entrance to Plantation Pines subdivision.

What: Fire experts and a trained burn crew will conduct a prescribed burn on a 22-acre pine flatwoods habitat in northern Volusia County. Media representatives have the option to wear fire-protective gear and get close to or participate in the action as they report on this powerful land management tool.

When: November 16, 1999. Please note that the burn date may change depending on weather conditions. Call Chief Kathleen Weaver's office at 904-736-5940 on the day of the burn for information.

Where: The Plantation Pines property in northern Volusia County. The 22-acre tract borders SR 40. Fire breaks are provided by the entrance to Plantation Pines and a small lake. The natural community found on the site is predominantly a scrub oak and pine, with an understory of palmetto, galberry, and holly.

Why: Prescribed burning is a vital land management technique used to prevent wildfire and to restore and maintain some of Florida's threatened native habitats. Fire has been an important part of Florida's landscape for thousands of years, and many plants and animals have come to rely on it for their survival. Pine flatwoods are maintained by frequent, medium-intensity fires that historically returned every 3-7 years. Fires expose the bare soils that favor pine seed germination, stimulate the flowering and seed production of many plants, and limit the abundance of weedy oaks and other hardwoods. Fire exclusion leads to a build up of fuels that can feed a wildfire, or the eventual replacement of pines with hardwoods, and a concomitant replacement of the plants and animals of the forest ecosystem. Frequently burned sites tend to be somewhat open with a diverse ground cover of palmettos, shrubs, grasses, and herbs. The Plantation Pines property was surrounded by wildfire on three sides in 1998, but did not burn because of extraordinary efforts of many fire crews to halt the advancing firestorm.

Who: The Florida office of The Nature Conservancy, Volusia County Fire Services, and the Bunnell district office of the DOF.