



Keeping Fire on Our Side



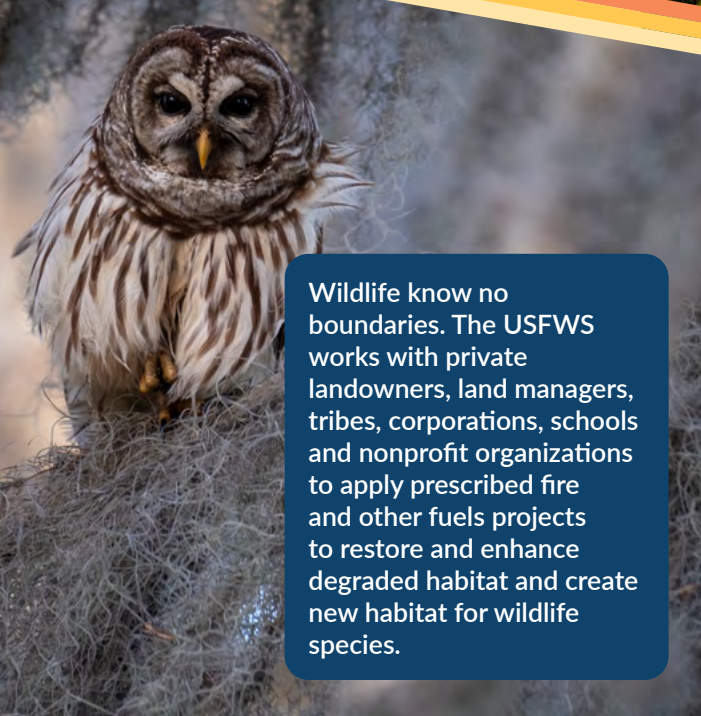
CAREERS IN FIRE

Wildland firefighting is a physically and mentally demanding occupation requiring arduous physical fitness, as well as skills in leadership, communication, and risk management. A wildland firefighter's knowledge includes fire planning and operations, fire ecology, emergency management, hydrology, wildlife and fisheries biology, forestry and soil sciences.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protects more than 2,000 plant and animal species worldwide. Among those, more than 500 require periodic fire to maintain habitat for their survival.



Wildlife know no boundaries. The USFWS works with private landowners, land managers, tribes, corporations, schools and nonprofit organizations to apply prescribed fire and other fuels projects to restore and enhance degraded habitat and create new habitat for wildlife species.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stewards more than 560 National Wildlife Refuges across the country, protecting the nation's natural and cultural resources and threatened and endangered wildlife species.

Much of North America's diverse landscapes evolved with the influence of fire, shaped by lightning and the cultural burning practices of Indigenous peoples. More than 80 percent of National Wildlife Refuge System lands are fire dependent, from marsh to forest to prairie. These ecosystems rely on periodic fire disturbance to remain productive wildlife habitat.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

The USFWS Fire Management Program conducts prescribed burns that mimic naturally occurring low-intensity fires. Restoring fire to the landscape conserves, protects, and enhances fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. Low-intensity fire stimulates plant growth, controls invasive weeds, minimizes pests and disease, and recycles nutrients back into the soil. Safety is always a priority when conducting prescribed burns. Each burn begins with a carefully written plan that considers weather conditions, such as wind, humidity and temperature, as well as the availability of fire personnel and equipment to successfully conduct a safe burn that will produce desired habitat benefits.


This careful planning results in low-intensity, slow-moving fires that provide wildlife a chance to escape by burrowing, taking refuge in trees above the flames, or simply leaving the area until it is safe to return.

Prescribed fire also benefits local communities by removing dead vegetation accumulation that can fuel wildfire. Through regular burning, this "fuel load" is reduced, lowering the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

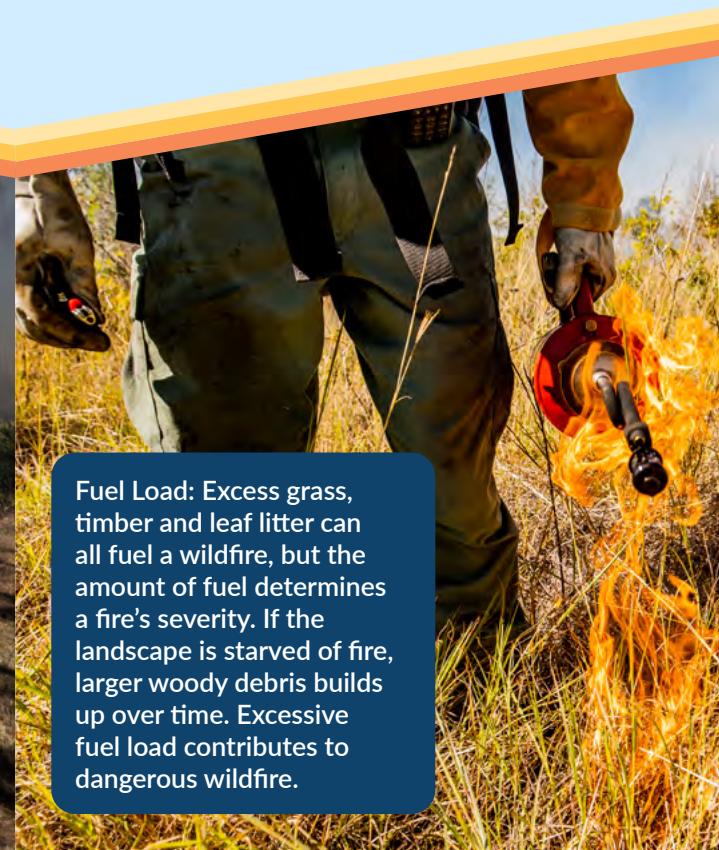
In addition to using prescribed fire, the USFWS reduces wildfire risk by thinning trees and brush and creating fuel breaks. These strategically placed clearings reduce wildfire intensity and slow fire spread.

WILDFIRE RESPONSE

USFWS fire personnel are mobilized across the country to assist in wildfire suppression efforts. These responses are critical to containing wildfires and ensuring public safety.



Specialized equipment allows fire personnel to access otherwise unreachable locations in order to apply prescribed fire to the landscape.



Fuel Load: Excess grass, timber and leaf litter can all fuel a wildfire, but the amount of fuel determines a fire's severity. If the landscape is starved of fire, larger woody debris builds up over time. Excessive fuel load contributes to dangerous wildfire.