



ABOUT PRESCRIBED FIRE




What is Prescribed Fire?

Prescribed fire is the planned, controlled application of fire to an area. For thousands of years, indigenous people have been skillfully using prescribed fire for many different purposes. Now, it is widely used as a tool to reduce fuels, improve forest health and resilience, and enhance native plants.

Yurok Nation Grassland Restoration 2019. <i>From the CAL PBA (https://calpba.org/) photo gallery</i>	Lightning ignitions
	



Why is it important?

Frequent fire from lightning strikes and indigenous burning meant that fires burned in many parts of our area every 2 - 15 years at lower elevations. This kept fuel levels low and forests more open and variable in size and spacing. These frequent fires were mostly low intensity, with flames low to the ground, because the dead and live fuels were burned before they could accumulate. For more than 150 years, fires have been suppressed in California. Forests and shrublands have grown dense, and the fuels have built up. As a result, wildfires are more intense and often damaging. With our dry environment, decomposition or the breakdown of litter, leaves and needles, occurs very slowly. Fire has been the natural “decomposer” in these dry, fire prone landscapes. Regular fires also kept forests less dense or crowded because some of the little trees were killed. There has been a growing movement to restore low intensity fire, or “good fire” to prevent fuel accumulation and formation of dense forests.

<p>Reduces fuels <i>Photo from a previously thinned and burned area in eastern Plumas National Forest during the Antelope Wildfire. Nearby untreated areas had crown fire. Photo from the Fire Behavior Assessment Team (https://www.frames.gov/fbat/publications)</i></p>	<p>Thins little trees before they become a dense forest</p>	<p>Restores resilient/healthy forests <i>Ash fertilizes trees. Less fuels reduces crown fire. Shallower leaf litter and duff lets more water infiltrate into the soil and tree roots.</i></p>
		

Why Use Prescribed Burning?

Low intensity-controlled burns can be used to improve defensible space, clean up forest debris, restore forest, and soil health. Prescribed burning is a cheap and easy to use tool to reduce and maintain low surface fuels, the leaves, needles, sticks and low growing plants. To burn safely, you must first remove ladder fuels (i.e. small trees, lower branches), thin the forest and pile burn or remove large wood/debris. Prescribed burning also enhances native plants.

<p>Cheap understory or surface fuel maintenance <i>low intensity burn near a home in the Lower Colfax Firewise Community</i></p>	<p>Enhance Native Plants <i>Many are adapted to fire and increase and thrive with low intensity fire</i></p>
	

Other reasons to burn include:

- Improved forage and wildlife habitat
- Improved range for ranchers
- Control pests (like ticks) and invasive grasses and weeds

How do we prepare and conduct a prescribed burn?

The first step is to look at the land and decide why you want to burn. These are the burn objectives or what you are trying to do. This could include any of the reasons listed above. The most common reasons people burn is to remove fuel hazards, improve defensible space, restore forests and enhance native plants.

The next step is to prepare the site for burning. The **Prepare to Burn** and **Control Fact Sheets** go into more detail on how to prepare a site to burn and conduct the burn.

<p>Prepare the site and make a plan</p>	<p>Get permits as needed, watch the weather to see when it is safe, and make sure to see if it is a burn day</p>	<p>Burn safely, with control using slow fire spread, water, tools and neighbors or friends <i>Butte Prescribed Burn Association neighborhood burn.</i></p>	<p>Make sure it is out and keep an eye on it for a couple of weeks just to make sure</p>
			

If all these steps are completed successfully then we proceed with our prescribed burn.

A good prescribed burn is:

- Planned, and controlled, with low and slow fire.
- Meets your objectives.
- Avoids smoldering or burning longer than needed, managing smoke.
- Relaxed and fun!

