Plant Enhancement Activity – PLT31 – Forest stand improvement, prescribed burning – short return interval

Enhancement Description
This enhancement is the controlled use of fire in a forest to restore native forest conditions with a focus on improving the condition of fire-adapted plants and wildlife habitat and reducing the risk of damage from intense, severe wildfires.

Land Use Applicability
Forestland

Benefits
Prescribed burning restores native forest communities that improve ecological conditions for plant health and vigor, reduced risk of wildfire hazard, and enhanced wildlife habitat. Prescribed burning in fire-adapted ecosystems is beneficial and cost effective in regenerating desirable tree species, controlling invasive plants, and creating snags and den/cavity trees for wildlife. Short fire return interval is important to prevent encroachment of competing vegetation, native and non-native, that degrade habitat for desired plant and wildlife species.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement applies to conifer or mixed forest land acres which have a forest management plan that recommends a prescribed burn within the next 3 years.

Criteria
Implement the following actions:
1. Apply to sites where prescribed burning has previously been implemented at long intervals.
2. Develop and apply a prescribed burning plan that complies with state and local regulations and NRCS policy.
3. The prescribed burn interval must be reduced from the previous regimen to an interval of no more than 2 or 3 years.
4. Thoroughly assess the existing fuel load. The following references should be used to make this determination:
   a. The degree of departure from reference condition vegetation, fuels and disturbance regimes using the Fire Regime Fire Condition Class (FRCC) Guidebook, for vegetation types that are adapted to fire.
5. Assess the need for pre-treatment of vegetation and fuels and for complementary practices such as Fuel Break, Firebreak, and Forest Slash Treatment.
6. If invasive plants are present, utilize methods and timing that will prevent or control their spread.

7. A written plan must be developed and all necessary approvals secured prior to conducting a prescribed burn. The plan will include the following components at a minimum:
   a. The objectives of the burn and the expected post-burn conditions.
   b. Maps, images and/or descriptions of the proposed burn area and any associated or adjacent smoke sensitive areas.
   c. Inventory of available fuels.
   d. Required weather and fuel conditions under which the burn will be conducted.
   e. Firing sequence and methods.
   f. List of equipment and personnel needed and job assignments.
   g. Any pre-burn preparation needed to safely and effectively conduct the burn
   h. List of appropriate authorities, agencies, departments, individuals, and facilities to be contacted and necessary signatures of approval.
   i. Checklist for a post-burn evaluation.

Burning criteria:
1. Follow all components of the burn plan.
2. A current fire weather forecast is required prior to conducting a prescribed burn. Collect weather parameters and other data that affect fire behavior for the day of the burn and monitor the appropriate weather parameters during the burn. Weather conditions outside those prescribed in the written plan will result in postponement or cessation of the burn.

Adoption Requirements
This enhancement is considered adopted when the criteria has been implemented on the land use acre.

Documentation Requirements
1. A copy of the written burn plan
2. Description of post-burn conditions with representative digital images of the treated area

References
