Putting Fire Science on the Ground

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The Southern Fire Exchange (SFE) is a new regional program for fire science development and delivery across 11 southeastern states - building on the South's long history of fire outreach and extension. The SFE was created in 2010 with funding from the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) and is a member of the network of regional JFSP knowledge exchange consortia. Specifically, SFE's mission is to increase the availability and application of fire science information for natural resource management and to serve as a conduit for fire managers to share new research needs with the research community.

The consortium is led by the University of Florida (Principal Investigator, Leda Kobziar; Administrative Director, Alan Long), North Carolina State University, Tall Timbers Research Station, and US Forest Service InterfaceSouth, with multiple partners from non-profit organizations, federal and state agencies, and other fire-related programs. A Steering Committee and Advisory Board provide leadership, strategic direction, and approval for activities and priorities. Our primary audience is the southern fire management community, but we also provide information to private landowners through national and state landowner organizations.

Based on results from focus groups and an online survey conducted with fire managers across the southern region in 2009, SFE activities focus on four technology transfer mechanisms:

1. Providing information through the web-based SFE Resource Center which consolidates southern fire information and provides new ways for the southern fire community to interact and learn from one another (www.southernfireexchange.org).
2. Planning and delivering webinars, field days, and demonstrations to bring together fire researchers and managers.
3. Disseminating fire research results through our Fire Lines newsletter, research syntheses, fact sheets, and presentations to Prescribed Fire Councils and other groups.
4. Providing fact sheets, presentations, and other resources to assist public education efforts.

Nationwide, eight consortia have completed a needs assessment phase and are in their first year of science delivery activities. The JFSP vision is for this collaborative science delivery network to accelerate the awareness, understanding, and adoption of wildland fire science information by federal, tribal, state, local, and private stakeholders within ecologically similar regions. In the Southeast, the SFE focuses science delivery for yellow pine ecosystems, while the Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists (www.cafms.org) focuses on mountain pine and hardwood ecosystems. Visit www.firescience.gov to learn more about the consortia programs.

The Southern Fire Exchange and CFEOR are co-hosting a workshop at the Osceola National Forest on fire and fuels reduction in pine flatwoods forests on Sept. 28th. (http://sfrc.ufl.edu/CFEOR/Upcoming%20Events.html) The activities include presentations and demonstrations of new research addressing how fires affect how subsequent fires burn, the consequences of mowing understory fuels for meeting long and short-term fuels reduction objectives, and the repercussions of combined fuel treatments (fire and mowing) on vegetation recovery, composition, and soil nutrients.

We encourage CFEOR members to provide feedback on how the Southern Fire Exchange can better serve the southern fire community. If you have a new or relevant fire-related fact sheet or publication to share, you are planning a workshop or field day of interest, or you would like to partner with SFE on any activities, please email us at sfe@ifas.ufl.edu.
Recent Research

Public preferences for controlling upland invasive plants in state parks: Application of a choice model


Invasive plants can have ecological impacts and cause economic harm particularly when recreational opportunities are lost. While the value of nature-related tourism has been assessed, little is known about the effect of invasive plants on recreational choices. This study uses non-market valuation techniques for the first time to quantify the net benefit of managing invasive plants in upland areas. We surveyed 1436 Florida residents to determine their preferences for state parks using discrete choice experiment questions with various levels of invasive plants and other attributes that impact visitation. Results imply that residents would be willing to pay $5.41 per-visit to reduce the coverage of invasive plants, $3.72 to improve facilities, $3.73 to increase the diversity of native plant species, and $6.71 to increase the diversity of native animal species. Using score variables to capture interaction effects, demographic variables were found to influence the marginal willingness-to-pay for invasive species control by −$1.13 to +$0.97 per visit. Those who have taken action against or are more knowledgeable about invasive species were also found to influence a respondent's willingness to pay (+$2.47 and +$0.83, respectively). Respondents who consider invasive species to be beneficial (e.g., since many species were imported for their esthetics) would be willing to pay an additional $0.80 per visit to a park with increased coverage. Using annual attendance data from 115 Florida state parks, we calculated statewide willingness-to-pay to manage invasive plants in upland parks. Park users would be willing to spend $89.4 million annually to reduce the level of invasive plants in the parks, which provides a baseline for evaluating control programs. Since current levels of funding ($32 million annually) are insufficient to control invasive plants, additional management may be warranted. ©Elsevier. To read the full article members click [here](http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/CFEOR/Upcoming Events.html).

Upcoming Events

- **CFEOR Workshop!**
  
  *Landscape-scale mechanical fuels reduction treatments effects on fire behavior, fuel loads, and forest ecology, Sept 28, 2011 in Olustee, FL.* A tour and discussion of new research conducted at the Osceola National Forest to quantify the wildfire risk reduction effectiveness and consequences to soil and vegetation of mechanically chopping and burning understory shrubs and small trees in pine flatwoods. Workshop is free to CFEOR members and $5 for non CFEOR members. To learn more and register go to [www.sfrc.ufl.edu/CFEOR/Upcoming Events.html](http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/CFEOR/Upcoming Events.html)

- **Southeast Herbicide Applicator Conference, October 3-5, 2011** at the Edgewater Beach Resort, Panama City Beach, FL. See website for details: [http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/sehac/](http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/sehac/) or contact Johanna Gilbert, Conference Coordinator, UF-IFAS, Office of Conferences & Institutes, (352) 392-5930, [jhanna@ufl.edu](mailto:jhanna@ufl.edu)

- **2nd Annual Shortleaf Pine Conference, September 20-22, 2011** Huntsville, Alabama. Conference will include speakers, field trips, and discussion related to Shortleaf pine management for timber and wildlife habitat needs. Details will follow.

- **Ninth Symposium on Fire and Forest Meteorology, October 18-20, 2011** in Palm Springs, CA. To learn more go to [http://www.ametsoc.org/meet/fainst/20119fireforest.html](http://www.ametsoc.org/meet/fainst/20119fireforest.html)
CFEOR Mission:
To develop and disseminate knowledge needed to conserve and manage Florida’s forest as a healthy, working ecosystem that provides social, ecological and economic benefits on a

Upcoming Events

- Florida Society of American Foresters and UF School of Forest Resources Symposium, November 8-9, 2011 in Gainesville FL. For more information contact Dr. Pat Minoge at pminogue@ufl.edu or (850)875-7142.

- Mark your calendars!– Natural Areas Conference on November 1-4, 2011. An exceptional conference experience! Located in the Florida Panhandle, the unique landscapes will provide an exciting conference setting and diverse field trip opportunities. The Florida State University Conference Center offers a state-of-the-art venue to share research through numerous technical symposia including a symposia on groundcover restoration in long leaf pine systems hosted by CFEOR! The extensive program also features special sessions including an all-day Cogengrass workshop and State and Federal Natural Area Roundtables; our co-host NAEPPC will feature dedicated tracks for sharpening-the-saw in invasive species management. Register early at www.naturalarea.org/11Conference/


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