

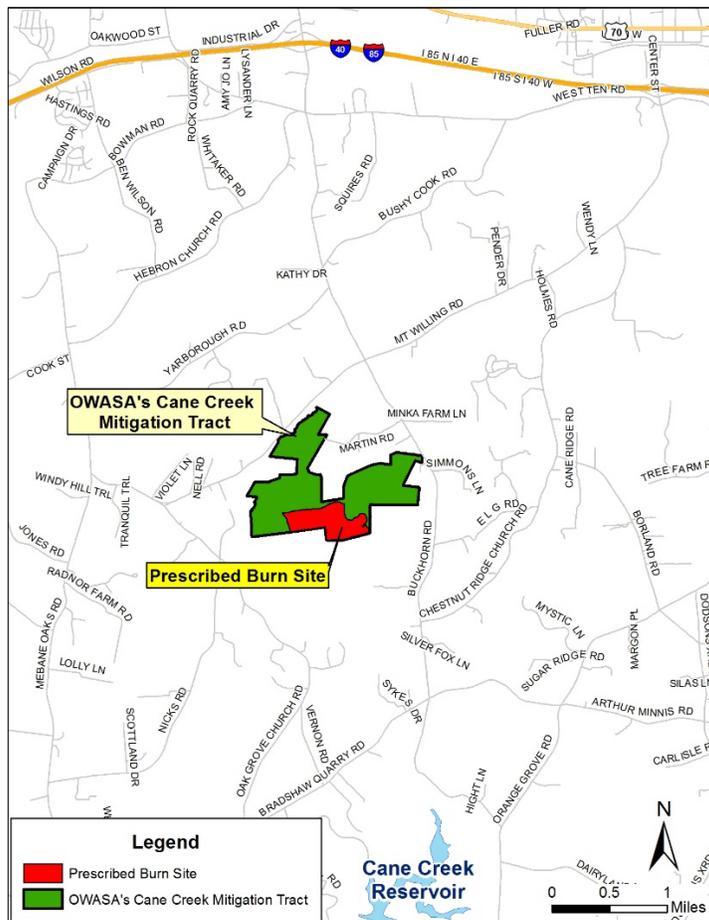


Prescribed Burn at OWASA's Cane Creek Mitigation Tract

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where will the prescribed burn take place?

The prescribed burn will take place on an approximately 90-acre area consisting of a thinned upland hardwood stand and two shortleaf pine stands at the south end of OWASA's Cane Creek Mitigation Tract. The Mitigation Tract is south of the intersection of Buckhorn Road and Mount Willing Road. The map below shows the proposed prescribed burn location.



2. When will the prescribed burn take place?

The prescribed burn will most likely take place in April but could occur as late as early May. This will be a growing-season burn designed to favor oak, hickory, and shortleaf pine regeneration.

3. Why don't you know the exact date of the prescribed burn?

Prescribed burns are conducted under closely predicted and monitored weather conditions by crews trained in fire behavior. Every precaution is taken to ensure the safety of the public, and the prescribed burn will take place on a date and time where proper weather conditions exist and smoke impacts to nearby landowners will be minimized. Considering these factors, the date is typically not known until the day prior to the prescribed burn.

4. How can I be notified the day of or the day before the prescribed burn?

You may sign up to receive an email from OWASA at <https://bit.ly/2PKrcpT>.

5. Who will do the prescribed burn?

The North Carolina Forest Service will be installing the fire breaks and conducting the prescribed burn.

6. How long will the prescribed burn take?

The North Carolina Forest Service estimates that active burning will take approximately 6 to 8 hours, and residual burning will last 2 to 3 hours afterward. If the burn begins at 10:00 a.m., a typical burn start time, active burning would occur until 4:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon, and most residual smoke would be cleared by 6:00 or 8:00 p.m.

7. Why are you doing the prescribed burn?

OWASA is implementing the prescriptions of their Forest Stewardship Plan developed to comply with conditions of the permit received to build Cane Creek Reservoir. Some of the goals for that plan include (1) enhancing wildlife habitat and (2) protecting water quality. The goal for the upland hardwood area is to promote regeneration and restoration of oak and hickory species on this site to provide food and habitat for wildlife. At an early age, these two species are often out-competed by more aggressive maples, sweetgum, poplar, pines, and other woody vegetation which do not provide the same long-term wildlife benefits. Oak and hickory saplings are more resistant and adapted to fire. They have a greater ability to survive a fire because they have a better-established root system than these other species. The fire will select for the oak and against other woody species. Done properly, "release" growing-season burning can dramatically change the species composition to one that favors oak. Similarly, shortleaf pine seedlings are also more resistant to fire than loblolly pine.

8. Is a prescribed burn safe?

Safety is the top priority of every prescribed burn. Safety is prioritized when developing a burn plan, preparing the site for the prescribed burn, selecting the day on which to do the burn, using certified prescribed burners, and monitoring during and after the burn. Additional information is provided in the next question.

9. What precautions do you take during a prescribed burn?

The following components of a prescribed burn include safety precautions:

- **Burn Plan** – A burn plan is developed for each burn. It includes plans for fire and smoke control, allowable weather conditions, personnel needs, and actions to take should weather or other conditions change during the burn.
- **Firebreaks** – Wide, cleared corridors with bare soil are created around the burn area to ensure that the fire doesn't leave the burn site.
- **Smoke Management** – The North Carolina Forest Service has written guidelines to manage smoke and minimize the impacts to neighboring landowners. The burn plan includes the weather and wind conditions under which the prescribed burn may occur.
- **Certified Prescribed Burners** – The North Carolina Forest Service uses only certified prescribed burners to conduct their prescribed burns.
- **Continuous Monitoring of Burn Site** – The burn site is continuously monitored by the burn crew during and after the burn is completed.
- **Pre-burn Communication** – The North Carolina Forest Service will notify the Orange County Emergency Manager, the Orange County Fire Marshall, and the Orange Grove Volunteer Fire District about the burn.
- **Fire Equipment** – Fire equipment and fire tools will be on site in case the fire escapes the firebreaks. This equipment will be on standby and will be able to quickly stop and extinguish break overs. Sufficient fire personnel will be on-site to patrol and monitor the burn, so that they can quickly address any issues.

10. How high will the flames be during the prescribed burn?

The flames will be 2 to 4 feet high.

11. What are the impacts of the prescribed burn to neighboring landowners?

Smoke is the main impact. The prescribed burn will be conducted on a day when weather conditions will minimize impacts. Smoke may be present during and after the burn, but it should quickly subside and be almost unnoticeable on the following evening.

“Smoke” signs will also be placed along main thoroughfare roads. Caution should be used when driving through smoke and/or fog if you travel while a prescribed burn is taking place.

12. How will neighboring landowners be notified?

All neighboring landowners have been notified by OWASA through mail that the burn will take place sometime in April or early May. Adjacent landowners will be notified the day prior to the burn through mail box hangers. Anyone who wishes to receive email notification of the actual burn date may sign up at <https://bit.ly/2PKrcpT>.

13. What are the impacts of the prescribed burn on wildlife?

Over the long term, prescribed fire has a positive benefit to wildlife. This prescribed burn is being designed to encourage oak and hickory in the understory, which provide important food and habitat for wildlife. During the prescribed burn, there could be a short-term displacement of wildlife, and some birds may lose their nests. However, most bird species will re-nest, and with the improved habitat may be more successful in raising their young. There is also a small chance that some individuals of certain species such as turtles and

salamanders may not be able to bury and could lose their life in the fire. However, the resulting improved habitat results in a longer-term increase in the number of turtles and salamanders. Thus, short-term impacts to wildlife are more than offset by the improved habitat.

14. How can I get more information?

Additional information about the NC Forest Service's prescribed burn program can be obtained from the Orange County Forest Service Office at 919-732-8152 or email orange.ncfs@ncagr.gov. For additional information about OWASA, the Cane Creek Mitigation Tract, or OWASA's land management program, please contact Johnny Riley at 828-413-3491 or at jriley@owasa.org.

15. What can I do?

The public should stay away from the prescribed burn site on the day of the burn. This will enable the burn crew to focus on the prescribed burn, allow for easy access to emergency personnel should the need arise, and minimize traffic impacts to residents along Martin Road.

16. Are other burns planned for this site?

Yes. This is one of several prescribed burns that are planned for the Cane Creek Mitigation Tract in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Plan. Other burns would occur over the next several years.