

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### PRESCRIBED FIRE PRACTICES BENEFIT THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES



#### LIVE OAK, FLA., Jan. 29, 2019 –

Prescribed fire, also known as controlled burning, is used by the Suwannee River Water Management District (District) to maintain natural resources and reduce the risk of wildfires. The District recognizes Prescribed Fire Awareness Week, January 28 through February 1, to bring awareness to the importance and benefits of prescribed fire for land management.

“Controlled burning is a necessary tool used to improve the health of District lands and create a safer environment for the community by decreasing the chance of wildfires,” said Hugh Thomas, executive director of the District. “Our land management staff are focused on improving wildlife habitat and controlling invasive plants through prescribed fires.”

Prescribed fire helps facilitate overall ecological restoration by enhancing native upland and wetland vegetation and improving habitat for native wildlife.

***Prescribed fire is used by the District to maintain an ideal habitat for native wildlife and reduce the risk of wildfires.***

Prescribed fire is also used to reduce fuel levels in the forest to help lower the intensity of possible wildfires. Other benefits of controlled burns include plant disease control, soil nutrient restoration and aesthetic improvement.

Burn seasons are divided into dormant season and growing season. Dormant season consists of fall and winter months, while growing season includes spring and summer months. Each burn area is given a burn season prescription depending on weather conditions, fuel levels and the burn objective for the area.

Burn frequency for each tract of land is based on how frequently those areas would burn naturally. Ultimately, weather patterns determine how many acres are burned. Too much rain can make burning ineffective or even impossible. Too little rain can lead to unsafe conditions for any type of open fire.

Approximately 8,000 acres are planned for burning during the 2018-2019 burn season from November 2018 through September 2019. To date, 400 acres have been burned since November 2018. Higher than average rainfall in the region has delayed burn opportunities across much of the District. Prescribed burns will be conducted in the following counties the burn season: Lafayette, Dixie, Taylor, Suwannee, Jefferson, Hamilton, Levy, Madison, and Gilchrist. Control burns on District land are conducted only by contractors or agency personnel that are certified by the Florida Forest Service. On average 7,000-12,000 acres are burned each year.

For the safety and consideration of residents, the District posts prescribed fire information on its website. Visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com) for updates on scheduled burns and locations.

The mission of the Suwannee River Water Management District is to protect and manage water resources using science-based solutions to support natural systems and the needs of the public. The District holds true to the belief of water for nature, water for people. Headquartered in Live Oak, Florida, the District serves 15 surrounding north-central Florida counties.

For more information about the District, visit [www.mysuwanneeriver.com](http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com) or follow us on Facebook and Twitter, search @SRWMD.

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