



# NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:  
January 27, 2011

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## ***Prescribed Burning of Timberlands Underway at West Point Project***

**MOBILE, Ala**– The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at West Point Project announces prescribed burning of selected timber stands around the reservoir is underway. Each winter, the Corps works with Forestry Commissions in both Alabama and Georgia using controlled burning to improve wildlife habitat on the public property surrounding the reservoir.

Park Ranger Derrick Wilkerson, who manages this program, noted that “Prescribed fire is an important forest management tool. Many species and ecosystems require fire periodically to ensure their survival. The overall purpose of the prescribed burns is to maintain the land’s ecological integrity. For many of these ecosystems, it’s not a matter of “if” the land will burn, but rather “when.” We like to choose “when.”

The Corps conducts prescribed burning for a number of reasons. First, the fire removes accumulated fuels, such as pine straw, leaves and dead, dry vegetation, thus reducing the risk of an intense wildfire. Second, prescribed fires improve natural forest conditions by promoting seed germination, flowering, or sprouting of native plants. Third, burning of the forest and under story plants improves the forage quality and quantity for wildlife, such as deer, turkeys, and quail and other bird species. New shrub, herb, and grass sprouts capture the quick flush of nutrients into the soil after a fire and are often more nutritious and palatable than older plants. Finally, prescribed burning helps to control various pests such as ticks and pine beetles.

“We are very careful to avoid impacting adjacent neighborhoods with smoke from our fires. It’s understandable that people sometimes get upset when there is smoke in the air, especially if they don’t know the reason for the fire. That’s why we’re trying to get the word out about our prescribed burning program. Dealing with a little bit of smoke now is definitely better than trying to control a raging wildfire later,” added Ranger Wilkerson.

A total of some 2,100 acres of public land are included in the Corps’ burning plan for 2011, including areas like Amity Campground, R.S. Heard Day Use Area and Campground, Whitetail Ridge Campground, Holiday Campground, Earl Cook Day Use, Bird Creek, Glass Bridge Park, and Clark Park.

For more information on this topic or issue the



specific on this any other related to

management of West Point Project, please contact the Project Management Office at 706-645-2937, or visit the West Point Lake home page on the Internet at <http://westpt.sam.usace.army.mil/>

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – MOBILE DISTRICT**  
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A US Army Corps of Engineers West Point Park Ranger using a drip torch to start a backfire during a prescribed burn. USACE Photo.

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