



Prescribed Burning

*Conservation solutions for
your Pennsylvania farm*

Do you have problems with...

- Controlling undesirable vegetation?*
- Low quality or low production forage?*
- Few native plant communities in your pasture?*
- Woody plant invasions into your pasture?*
- Poor wildlife habitat?*

If so, you should consider prescribed burning!

DEFINITION:

Prescribed burning is the intentional and controlled application of fire to a pre-determined area to reduce the risk of wildfire, improve wildlife habitat, control weeds, or improve pasture conditions.

Why use it?

- To control undesirable vegetation including woody plant invasion
- To prepare sites for planting or seeding
- To control plant disease and insects
- To improve wildlife habitat
- To improve forage production quantity and quality
- To remove slash and debris
- To enhance seed and seedling production
- To facilitate distribution of grazing and browsing animals
- To restore native plant communities



IMPORTANT: Laws and Regulations

Prescribed burning has certain risks associated with it. Ensure that you have a detailed plan, the correct equipment, enough trained personnel, and a clear understanding of the applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Understand that you may be liable for damages caused by fire escaping from your property or improper smoke management. Before conducting the burn, develop liability and safety precautions.

BENEFITS OF PRESCRIBED FIRE:

Conducting a prescribed burn can improve your pasture for grazing, enhance wildlife habitat, and/or increase biodiversity on your land.

Grazing:

Burning has been used for the last 10,000 years to rejuvenate grasslands. Fire can be used to control brush and the encroachment of woody plants without harming the grasses, because their roots run deeper.

Photo: Chris Helzer, The Nature Conservancy



Wildlife:

Prescribed fire can be used to clear dead understory, promoting the growth of new vegetation that serves as beneficial habitat for wildlife species.

Photo: Shane Eia, USDA/NRCS



Plant Diversity:

Burning can be used to promote plant diversity in forests or in pastures. To the left is a picture depicting the difference between burned (right) and non-burned (left) pasture.

Photo: arfirenetwork.org



MAKE A PLAN

Before conducting a prescribed burn make sure you have a well thought out, detailed plan of action. Your local NRCS office, or experienced local fire control professionals can help you develop a plan that will protect your land, your neighbors, and your workers.

Ideal Burning Conditions:

Temperature:	60-80 degrees F
Relative Humidity:	25 to 50%
Wind:	Steady winds: 5-18 mph
Time:	10am to 4pm

The plan should include:

- Location/description of burn area
- Objective/s of the burn
- Description of vegetation to be burned
- Burn area prep requirements
- Firebreak plans
- Smoke management plan
- Acceptable conditions for the burn
- Notification information
- The firing plan and procedure
- Identification of sensitive areas
- Permits needed
- Liability documentation
- Post burn evaluation plan and criteria

CONTROL: FIRE BREAKS

A firebreak is a strip of bare land or vegetation established or created to retard fire. They can be used to control the perimeters of a prescribed burn.

Firebreaks are useful temporary or permanent components of conservation and production systems that use prescribed burning. Firebreaks can be planned and implemented as proactive measures to control the perimeters of a prescribed burn. This practice is applicable on all land where fire is being used as a vegetation management tool. Fire breaks consist of fire-resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground, or any combination of the above. Locate firebreaks on the contour where practical to minimize the risk of soil erosion. Constructed firebreaks should tie into existing physical barriers. Firebreak construction must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, or permits.



Roadway



Vegetated Break



Plowed / Disked

Options:

- 1. Roadway:** Either existing or newly constructed roads can be effective firebreaks if properly installed / maintained.
- 2. Plowed, disked, or bladed land:** These strips should be located parallel to high risk areas, such as railroads or utility lines, or parallel to property boundaries. Should be the width of the disk, Mathis plow, or blade. Plow immediately before burning.
- 3. Burned firebreak:** Consist of two parallel plowed or disked strips (see above), each 5' wide, and a minimum of 20' apart. Burn the area between to create the firebreak.
- 3. Vegetated firebreaks:** Consist of cool season grass or grass legume strips at least 30' wide within or adjacent to grass fields and 50' wide within forests. Vegetated firebreaks should be cleared of trees and scrubby growth. The land should be prepared and seeded according to the NRCS Firebreak Job Sheet.

Conservation Solutions for your Pennsylvania Farm

Technical Help Is Available

Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can assist you in planning for a prescribed burn. Detailed plans and instructions are available. They can also help you develop a Conservation Plan to solve other problems you have identified on your farm.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply call your local office at the number listed below to set up an appointment for someone to come to your farm.



You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance through state or federal programs. Your NRCS office will explain various programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.

NRCS FIELD OFFICES:

Adams: 717-334-4216 ext 3
Allegheny: 724-482-4800 ext 3
Armstrong: 724-545-1022 ext 3
Beaver: 724-482-4800 ext 3
Bedford: 814-623-7900 ext 3
Berks: 610-372-4655 ext 3
Blair: 814-695-6291 ext 3
Bradford: 570-265-6969 ext 3
Bucks: 215-453-9527 ext 3
Butler: 724-482-4800 ext 3
Cambria: 814-472-5502 ext 3
Cameron: 814-375-2125 ext 3
Carbon: 570-779-0645 ext 3
Centre: 570-726-3196 ext 3
Chester: 610-696-0398 ext 3
Clarion: 814-226-8160 ext 3
Clearfield: 814-375-2125 ext 3
Clinton: 570-726-3196 ext 3
Columbia: 570-784-1062 ext 3
Crawford: 814-724-1852 ext 3
Cumberland: 717-249-1037 ext 3

Dauphin: 717-921-2380 ext 3
Delaware: 610-696-0398 ext 3
Elk: 814-375-2125 ext 3
Erie: 814-796-6760 ext 3
Fayette: 724-437-7971 ext 3
Forest: 814-226-8160 ext 3
Franklin: 717-264-8074 ext 3
Fulton: 717-485-3812 ext 3
Greene: 724-627-5821
Huntingdon: 814-627-1626 ext 3
Indiana: 724-463-8547 ext 3
Jefferson: 814-375-2125 ext 3
Juniata: 717-436-8953 ext 3
Lackawanna: 570-282-8732 ext 3
Lancaster: 717-299-5361 ext 3
Lawrence: 717-662-3740 ext 3
Lebanon: 717-272-3908 ext 3
Lehigh: 610-625-8392 ext 3
Luzerne: 570-779-0645 ext 3
Lycoming: 570-433-3902 ext 3
McKean: 814-274-8166 ext 3
Mercer: 717-662-3740 ext 3
Mifflin: 717-248-9541 ext 3

Monroe: 570-282-8732 ext 3
Montgomery: 215-453-9527 ext 3
Northampton: 610-625-8392 ext 3
Northumberland: 570-286-7114 ext 3
Perry: 717-582-4144 ext 3
Pike: 570-282-8732 ext 3
Potter: 814-274-8166 ext 3
Schuylkill: 570-622-1312 ext 3
Snyder: 570-837-0007 ext 3
Somerset: 814-445-6876 ext 3
Sullivan: 570-265-6969 ext 3
Susquehanna: 570-278-1011 ext 3
Tioga: 570-724-1726 ext 3
Union: 570-524-2549
Warren: 814-723-1217
Washington: 724-222-3060 ext 3
Wayne: 570-282-8732 ext 3
Westmoreland: 724-834-3970 ext 3
Wyoming: 570-836-2490 ext 3
Venango: 814-226-8160 ext 3
York: 717-755-2966 ext 3

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