

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning is the most important and cost effective tool for managing and improving forested ecosystems. Fire maintained ecosystems supply significant browse for wildlife thereby enhancing biodiversity and accessibility for training. Prescribed burning provides a mechanism for the reduction of fire fuel loads in forested areas, reducing likelihood wildfires will occur.

The prescribed burning program at Fort Rucker is predominately dormant season burning, which begins around the 1st of December and continues through April. The annual goal is to burn 10,000 to 12,000 acres.

Timber Stand Improvement (TSI)

TSI greatly reduces understory in which enhances the quality of timber stands. It is a regular maintenance program the Natural Resources Branch practices to ensure the best overall landscape for military training and timber productivity.

TSI can be anything that improves a stand of timber such as prescribed burning, thinning, mechanically and chemically reducing the understory for ease of mobility, improving the stand aesthetics and reducing the likelihood of wildfires. It also allows wildlife more browse coverage through out the installation. It is an overall great management practice for the ecology as well as military training.



Erosion Control

The soils on Ft. Rucker are highly erodible and subject to severe erosion. Natural Resources Management Plans require immediate stabilization of critical areas to protect the Installations surface waters. Loading decks, skid trails, roads and fire lanes are vegetated to stabilize fragile soils, protect surface waters from sediment and to improve the wildlife habitat. Unchecked erosion on Ft. Rucker can become catastrophic in a very short period of time. Vegetation establishment is the key to preventing serious environmental problems.

Identifying Pine by the Cone



Contact Information

(NRB Chief) Doug Watkins (334) 255-9363

(Installation Forester) James Jennings (334) 255-1661



Natural Resources Branch
Fort Rucker, Alabama

Shaping the War Fighter's Landscape



Forest Management

Timber Management

Fort Rucker timber compartments are on a 10 year management cycle. Cutting Units are managed in a way that timber harvesting occurs in Training Areas across the installation each year. This serves to limit any potential short-term negative effects on training in any one area.

Throughout each year, timber stand improvement (TSI) is conducted to ensure each stand of timber is maintained in a healthy manner. TSI is conducted using both mechanical and chemical control methods.

The Natural Resources Branch (NRB) conducts thinning of 3rd and 5th rows of standing timber within its plantations to reduce the amount of timber within an area to help stimulate the growth of the remaining timber.

Clear-cut, or Regeneration areas are usually only considered when a stand has reached its full growing potential, has a bug infestation or is not adequately stocked. Once an area is cut due to an infestation, the timber is burned and the area is replanted. TSI is performed on the area to keep unwanted vegetation from foliating. The area is then replanted and replaced back into the cycle of timber management.

Our Land Management Goals Include:

1. The availability, protection and sustainment of our lands for military training purposes.
2. The re-establishment of the Long Leaf Pine ecosystem on upland pine sites.
3. The enhancement of all wildlife ecosystems and the protection of all surface waters.



Thinning Timber

A thinning is a harvest operation in an immature or mature stand or group of trees to increase the rate of growth of residual timber, to improve biodiversity, to foster higher quality forest environments, to improve spacing and to promote sanitation. Low-thinning is the primary thinning method used in mature stands of timber on Fort Rucker. Individual tree selection is the primary method of marking mature timber for low thinning. A low thinning focuses on removing diseased, suppressed and overtopped trees, as well co-dominants and dominants that most likely will not survive until the stand is revisited for subsequent thinning or other harvests.

Fort Rockers thinning efforts becoming more focused on conservation of existing pine stands of longleaf pine. Removing intermediate and/or suppressed under desirable pines and increased fire frequency and intensity encourage desired longleaf pines.

Thinning pine plantations and natural pine stands are a great way of pleasing the aesthetics and health of the stand as well as creating a great training environment for ground troops so they can easily maneuver.

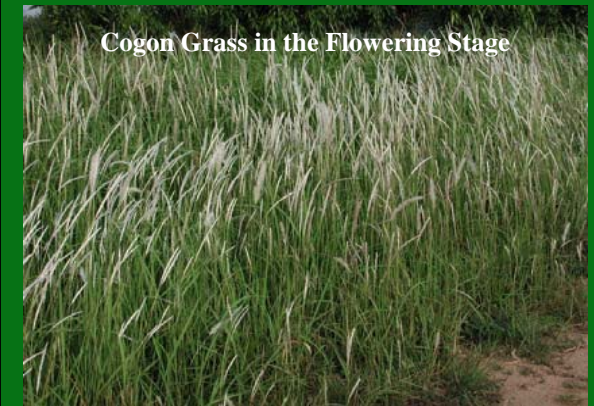


Invasive Species

Executive Order 13112: "Prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause..."

Fort Rucker Invasive Species;

- **Cogon Grass-**
The NRB treats Cogon Grass infestations with chemical applications throughout the growing stage and geospatially tracks the locations and herbicide application of each infestation.



- **Kudzu-**
Kudzu control is primarily implemented through chemical applications and targeted by areas that are to be thinned or classified as a regeneration area.



Kudzu is very invasive!