

Five ways to fight wildfires on your property

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION

Damages from wildland fires can be devastating to your forests and wildlife. A single wildfire during the wrong set of conditions can wipe out years of investment in your trees. Here are five ways you can become proactive in wildfire protection:

1. Install firebreaks

Construct and maintain firebreaks around the perimeter of your forest to help keep fire from entering your property. Interior firebreaks help contain wildfire in isolated areas and aid in wildfire suppression.

Firebreaks also allow for easier access to inspect your timber

while providing trails for recreation.

2. Prescribed burns

Use of controlled fire is one of the best methods of reducing hazardous fuels, thus reducing damages to your forest in the event of a wildfire.

Some forest owners might want to do it themselves. The Alabama Forestry Commission recommends that you become a certified burn manager. Check the AFC website periodically for upcoming prescribed burn workshops.

3. Mitigate along the edge

Reduce hazardous accumulations of flashy fuels along road-

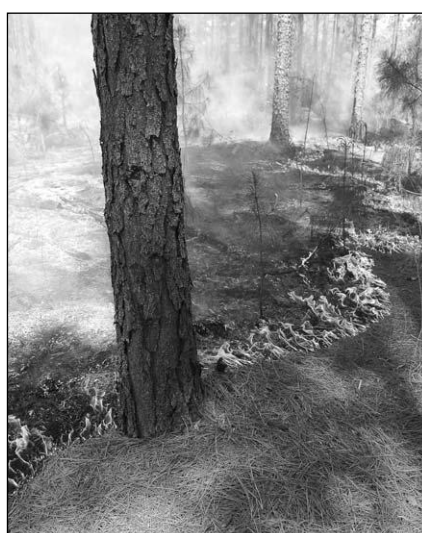


Photo Southern Foresters
Wildfires can threaten lives, property and our precious natural resources.

ways and property entrances where arson fires are most readily ignited. Remove scrubby vegetation, ladder fuels and mow or brush-cut the area. This reduces wildfire risk and adds to the aesthetics of your property.

4. Limit access

Install gates or similar barriers to limit unwanted access to your property and post your telephone number should someone need to contact you. This also helps minimize trespassing and protects your land from arson, dumping, poaching, timber theft and vandalism.

The Alabama Forestry Commission provides an arson/forest crimes hotline; the toll-free num-

ber is 1-800-222-2927. Information provided is confidential and you will remain anonymous.

5. Partner with others

If you are an absentee forestland owner, enlist the assistance of a trusted local resident to serve as your fire warden. Some might do this for little or no cost, for example, if you provide them with written permission to hunt on your land or written permission to cut pre-selected trees for firewood. Consult your attorney for ways to limit your liability when doing this.

For more information, visit www.forestry.alabama.gov.

DRONES: Software programs stitch together images taken by the drone

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for drones is becoming increasingly easy to use. Automated flight is often encouraged to reduce pilot errors and instead allow pilots to monitor flights and view live imagery. This imagery is available for direct transmission to tablets or smart phones.

"The use of software

programs, combined with the internal GPS in the drone, allows users to plan flights over the target areas," he said.

Image-stitching software

Aerial image-stitching software is necessary to make maps and calculate acreage. This image can be costly but there are certain

benefits.

"For building aerial images similar to Google Earth, a (drone) has to fly back and forth over a tract, taking overlapping pictures every few seconds," Brodbeck said.

Software programs stitch together the images taken by the drone. These programs line up each individual pixel in the images, meaning it can take two or more hours to develop a fully georeferenced image.

Brodbeck said this map-making technique comes at a significant cost. Multiple companies offer cloud-based online applications that can process the image stitching. They often require yearly fees, which start at approximately \$1,000. Some applications include a per-flight cost.

For more information on drones, visit www.aces.edu or contact your county Extension office.



Photo by Jason Boothe/Washington County News
Use of drones have become a common practice with property owners. Drones can be used for applying chemicals to property as well as to give a bird's-eye view of the property.



Photo by John O'Dell/Call News

Drone cameras work by using a combination of sensors and image stabilization technology to capture high-quality aerial footage.

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