



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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December 9, 2010

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Gentlemen:

Thank you for taking time to meet on-site with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) senior staff and board members to review outdoor recreation, forest management and prescribed burning on FDR State Park. Following our meeting at FDR, I have discussed related issues and opportunities with Parks, Recreation & Historic Sites (PRHSD) leadership. This letter is to provide you with our decisions on implementation of the FDR 50-year Resource Management Plan regarding use of prescribed fire and other pending management actions.

Prescribed Fire Frequency

We considered the impact of frequent cool season burning on the oak-hickory forest cover type. PRHSD will employ a 5-year burn rotation as opposed to the 3-year burn rotation originally presented. **As such, Unit 1 (158 acres) will not have prescribed fire reintroduced this winter (2011) or next (2012).** DNR will continue to monitor the effects of recent prescribed burns particularly with regards to health and vitality of dominant and co-dominant oaks and hickories. We may plan a burn for winter of 2013 in this unit. Note: DNR reserves the flexibility to lengthen this burn rotation even more if needed to protect mature hardwoods or to adjust to changing management needs. In rare situations when a shorter interval is needed (for example, to take advantage of strong longleaf seed production), we also reserve the flexibility for that change. In the event of such a change, the adjustment and justification will be coordinated with the Pine Mountain Trail Association (PMTA).

Burn Unit Size

We also discussed the size of burn units and impacts on key recreational sites. DNR will make every effort to limit burn unit size with the understanding that we want to minimize use of plowed fire breaks. We will consider, as a part of a prescribed fire needs assessment to be included as an addendum to the habitat management plan, permanent (or plowed) fire breaks around key longleaf dominated stands to allow for a more frequent burning schedule. **So, Unit 4 (1,320 acres) will not be burned in winter 2011.**

As we observed, Unit 4 has significant high-quality longleaf within it. We must protect these old growth trees and get a start on some recruitment. Prescribed fire will have to be reintroduced into those longleaf dominated stands, sooner rather than later. But, we will wait until the prescribed fire needs assessment is completed and for a full evaluation of alternatives to reduce this unit's size. Again, burning these longleaf sites may require introduction of new permanent breaks. Or, we may ultimately have to apply prescribed fire to the entire unit. In any case, DNR will apply the best available practices to protect recreational sites.

Longleaf Pine Regeneration

Our discussions also covered the topic of an old growth longleaf pine forest component that can not be sustained with the extremely limited recruitment of young longleaf currently across FDR State Park. This situation fails to meet our (DNR and PMTA) stewardship obligation to future generations. **I have instructed our forest management unit, in consultation with Nathan Klaus, to begin working on a plan to develop longleaf regeneration sites (up to 10 acres) within the old (approximate date: 1995) wildfire site on the extreme west end of the park.** This regeneration effort may require herbicide application and/or prescribed fire to control hardwood competition and planting of longleaf seedlings.

Other Units

While we did not visit Unit 6 on our field trip, previous correspondence indicates agreement on burning within this unit. **Unit 6 will be burned during the winter of 2011.** There is also an historic stand (Burn Unit 8) of planted longleaf on the east end of the park. DNR will consider options of reducing fire hazards mechanically then implementing routine burning in this unit.

Burn Needs Assessment

PRHSD and the Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) will complete a prescribed fire needs assessment for FDR State Park by November 1, 2011. This assessment will recognize the need to protect structures, protect significant recreational sites, protect old growth longleaf, manage key habitats and plant communities, reduce risks of catastrophic wildfires, as well as providing for other management needs. PMTA will be

asked for input throughout the assessment process. The burn needs assessment will be included as an addendum to the FDR State Park 50-year resource plan.

Conclusions

Recent correspondence as well as our time together at FDR set the stage for open and productive communication and cooperation between DNR and PMTA. Clearly, we have listened to your concerns and modified our management prescription in response. I hope that PMTA feels they can support our decisions as described above.

Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Todd Holbrook

cc: Warren Budd
Earl Barrs
Jenny Lynn Bradley
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