



Managing Your Woodlands: A Demonstration about Fire

This activity is designed to demonstrate how a fire behaves in managed vs. unmanaged woodlands and to show why managing woodlands with controlled, prescribed fire can help reduce the damaging impacts in the event of an uncontrolled wildfire. The idea was adapted from a Southern Fire Exchange demonstration.

Supplies:

- 2X Metal pans or trays with lids (9"x12" works well)
- Soil (dry is best; enough to fill the pans $\frac{3}{4}$ full)
- Matches (approx. 2 boxes of 300 count matchsticks)

Assembly Instructions:

1. Fill both metal pans about $\frac{3}{4}$ full of dry soil (enough so you can stand up matchsticks in the soil).
2. In one of the pans, stand up matchsticks in the soil to represent a managed woodland with spread out trees and small pockets of fuel sources (see image).
3. In the other pan, stand up matchsticks to represent an unmanaged (densely packed) woodland with lots of fuel sources that will carry a fire (see image).
4. Cover with lid for transport and storage.

Running the Demonstration:

1. Start with a quick intro to the activity: this will be a demonstration about the importance of using prescribed fire as a management tool for woodland habitats.
2. Ask the participants what they think each pan represents.
3. Ask them to make predictions about what would happen if a fire were to occur on each of the different "landscapes".
4. After a short discussion, light the pan that represents a managed woodland first and observe what happens. Ideally, it won't have the fuel load to carry across the pan (tough on windy days!). If the fire does carry a bit that is ok! It will move slow and have small flames, giving a nice example of how an ideal prescribed fire will move "low and slow" through a well-managed woodland.
5. Now light the unmanaged woodland pan - stand back! This fire will light easily and have large flames that will carry very quickly across the pan, so be ready!
6. Lead a discussion with participants about the differences between the two pans. How did the fire behave in each pan? Why did it behave that way? What are the impacts, positive or negative, of fire occurring on the managed vs. unmanaged landscapes? Why is prescribed fire an important management tool?
7. Answer any questions and provide additional information as needed based on the discussion.
8. It is also helpful to provide participants with resources on prescribed fire in their state, such as a state Prescribed Fire Council, Prescribed Burn Associations, or other agencies and local cooperatives that can provide guidance about prescribed fire.

