

Buffalo Trail Prescribed Fire Project
USDA Forest Service, Land Between The Lakes NRA
Stewart County, Tennessee
Request for Comment
October 2008

The proposed Buffalo Trail prescribed burn area is located in Stewart County, TN, west of The Trace, and wraps around the South Bison Range. It is bounded to the east by The Trace, to the west and north by the North/South Trail, and to the south by Forest Service Road (FSR) 211. See the map below for more information. The project area is 2,532 acres.

Purpose and Need for Action

The Buffalo Trail project is adjacent to the Prior Creek Oak-Grassland Restoration Demonstration Area and is designated as General Forest in the 2004 Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). This prescribed fire will provide both open forest structure and woodland structure in the project area. It will reduce leaf litter on the ground and remove shade-tolerant understory trees such as sugar maples, thereby releasing native herbaceous plants and eliminating competition for oak species that are characteristic of this ecosystem. The reduction of leaf litter will also lower the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the project area. The prescribed fire will reduce numbers of non-native invasive plants, making them easier to eliminate from the NRA, and allowing native species a better opportunity to thrive. This fire facilitates research being conducted on woodland bird populations by the University of Tennessee – Knoxville.

This project is instrumental in achieving LRMP Goal 5... *“Use a collaborative approach to maintain and restore: 1) a diversity of plant and animal communities that support viability of associated plants, fish, and wildlife; and, 2) sustainable levels of habitat and wildlife populations to support public demand for wildlife-related recreation”* (LRMP pg. 51-54).

This project will help to achieve the following objectives:

- OBJ5a: In mature oak forests, provide open forest structure on approximately 19,000 acres by the end of the first decade with a long-term objective of 31,000 acres.
- OBJ5b: In mature oak forests, provide woodland structure on approximately 6,000 acres by the end of the first decade with a long-term objective of 30,000 acres.
- OBJ5i: Maintain approximately 10,600 acres in open lands – cultivated and grassland cover types – to support game species, early successional species, and watchable wildlife.
- OBJ5j: Restore and maintain fire regimes and fire return intervals in fire dependent communities by prescribed burning an average of approximately 10,000 acres per year by the end of the first decade, with a long-term objective of 21,000 acres per year on average. Some acres will incur repeat fire application during the planning period.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing a single prescribed fire on 2,532 acres in the Buffalo Trail burn area in February-April, 2009. Fire staff will utilize a combination of ground ignition and aerial ignition (by helicopter) to ignite the burn unit. No fire lines will be constructed; instead, existing roads and trails will be used in conjunction with experienced firefighters to manage the fire and the smoke produced.

The category of these actions is Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, 31.2 Category Number 6, “Timber Stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.”

How to Comment

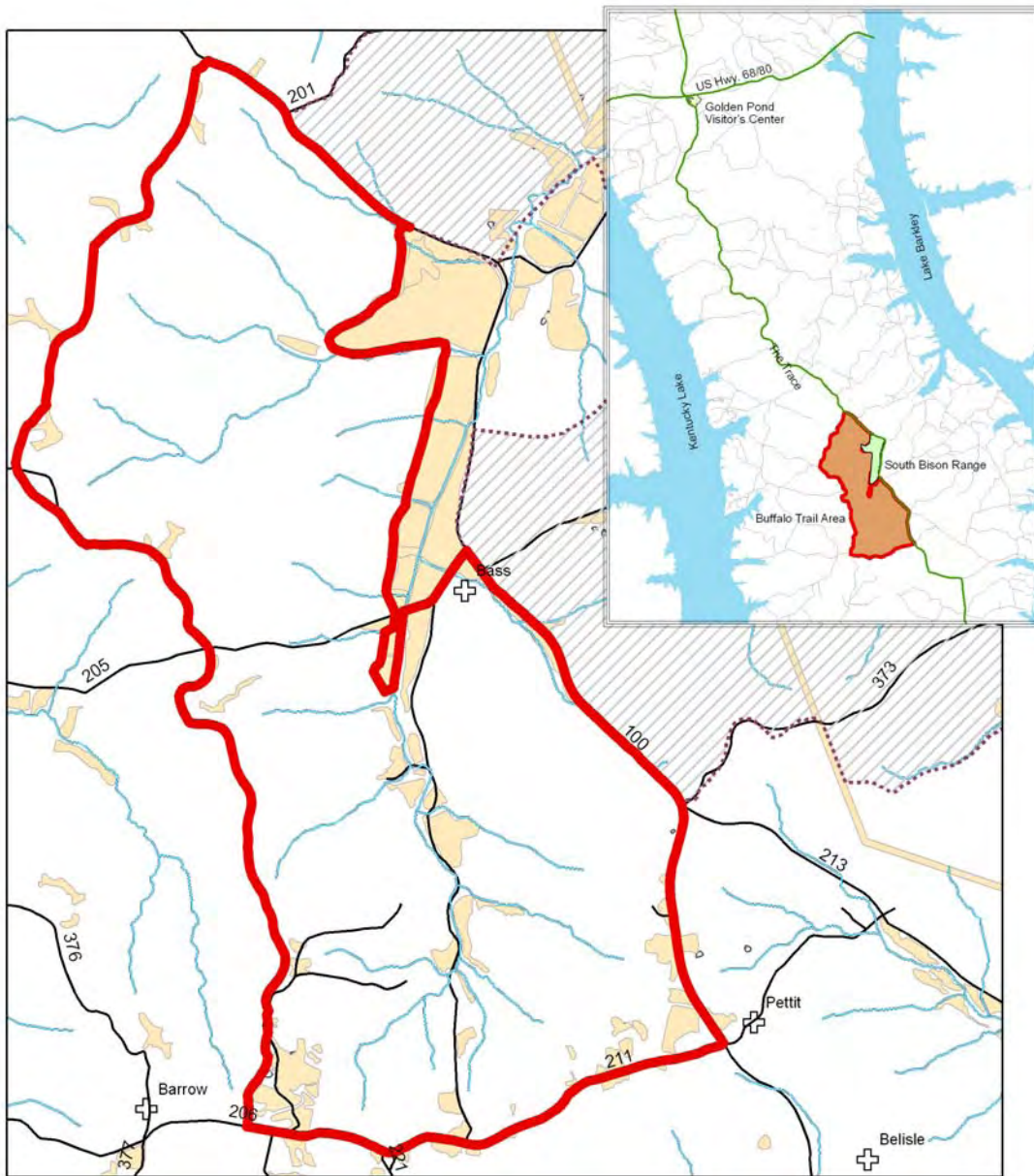
For the Buffalo Trail project, please send comments by e-mail in common digital format to: comments-southern-land-between-lakes@fs.fed.us; please include “Buffalo Trail” in the subject line. You may also send comments by postal mail to: Jim McCoy, Land Between The Lakes NRA, 100 Van Morgan Drive, Golden Pond, KY 42211; or telephone (270) 924-2048. Comments can be hand delivered to this address between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. To be most useful, your comments must be relevant to the actual project location, supported by any evidence you can provide, and should be received as soon as possible. Only those providing comments or otherwise expressing interest by the close of the comment period will have eligibility for appeal purposes (36 CFR 215.6). In order to have appeal eligibility, each individual or representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request; and, **comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days following the date of publication of the Request for Comments Notice in the legal notices of the Paducah Sun.**

Approved by:

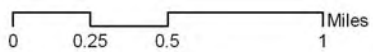
/s/ William P. Lisowsky

WILLIAM P. LISOWSKY

Area Supervisor



Buffalo Trail Prescribed Fire Project Area



Legend

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Cemetery | Stream |
| Fire boundary | Road |
| Oak Grassland Area | Open lands |