

Crooked Creek Prescribed Fire Project
USDA Forest Service, Land Between The Lakes NRA
Trigg County, Kentucky
Request for Comment
October 2008

The proposed Crooked Creek prescribed burn area is located in Trigg County, KY, east of The Trace, and it wraps around the Elk & Bison Prairie (EBP). It is bounded to the west by The Trace, to the east by FSR 153/148, to the north by FSR 153, and to the south by the EBP perimeter and US Hwy 68/80. See the map below. This is the second submittal for notice and comment for this project, in an attempt to gain more information from the public, and more information regarding heritage and historic preservation at the burn site. The project area is 1,548 acres.

Purpose and Need for Action

The Crooked Creek project is adjacent to the Elk & Bison Prairie and is designated as Oak-Grassland Restoration Demonstration Area. This project is in keeping with the vision of the LRMP “*Creation and development of two Oak-Grassland Demonstration Areas will establish open woodland conditions with rich and diverse understories of grasses and wildflowers, sustained by prescribed fire*” (LRMP pg. 24). This prescribed burn will remove excessive leaf litter from the ground, and minimize the risk of uncontrollable wildfire in the area. Oak grasslands created by this and other prescribed fires form a transition area between eastern forests and grasslands of the western U.S. They are extremely rare ecosystems, in large part because of fire suppression and the conversion of lands into agriculture since European settlement. These ecosystems include a suite of species that have adapted to regular fire occurrence to maintain the conditions they need for growth and reproduction. Without fire, oak grasslands in this part of the country convert to forest, thereby eliminating habitat for animals that require this unique ecosystem intermediate between forest and grassland. This prescribed fire will reduce leaf litter on the ground and remove understory, shade-tolerant trees such as sugar maples, thereby releasing native herbaceous plants and eliminating competition for oak species characteristic of this ecosystem. The prescribed fire will also 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 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 burn of 1,548 acres in the Crooked Creek burn area in February-April, 2009. See below for a map of the proposed prescribed burn area. This fire will occur in the transition season (prior to full green up) to facilitate a substantial reduction in the shrub layer and subsequently to begin to stimulate herbaceous development. Staff will utilize a combination of ground ignition and aerial ignition (by helicopter) to ignite the burn unit. No fire lines will be constructed, but rather existing roads and trails will be used in conjunction with experienced firefighters to manage the fire and the smoke it produces.

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."

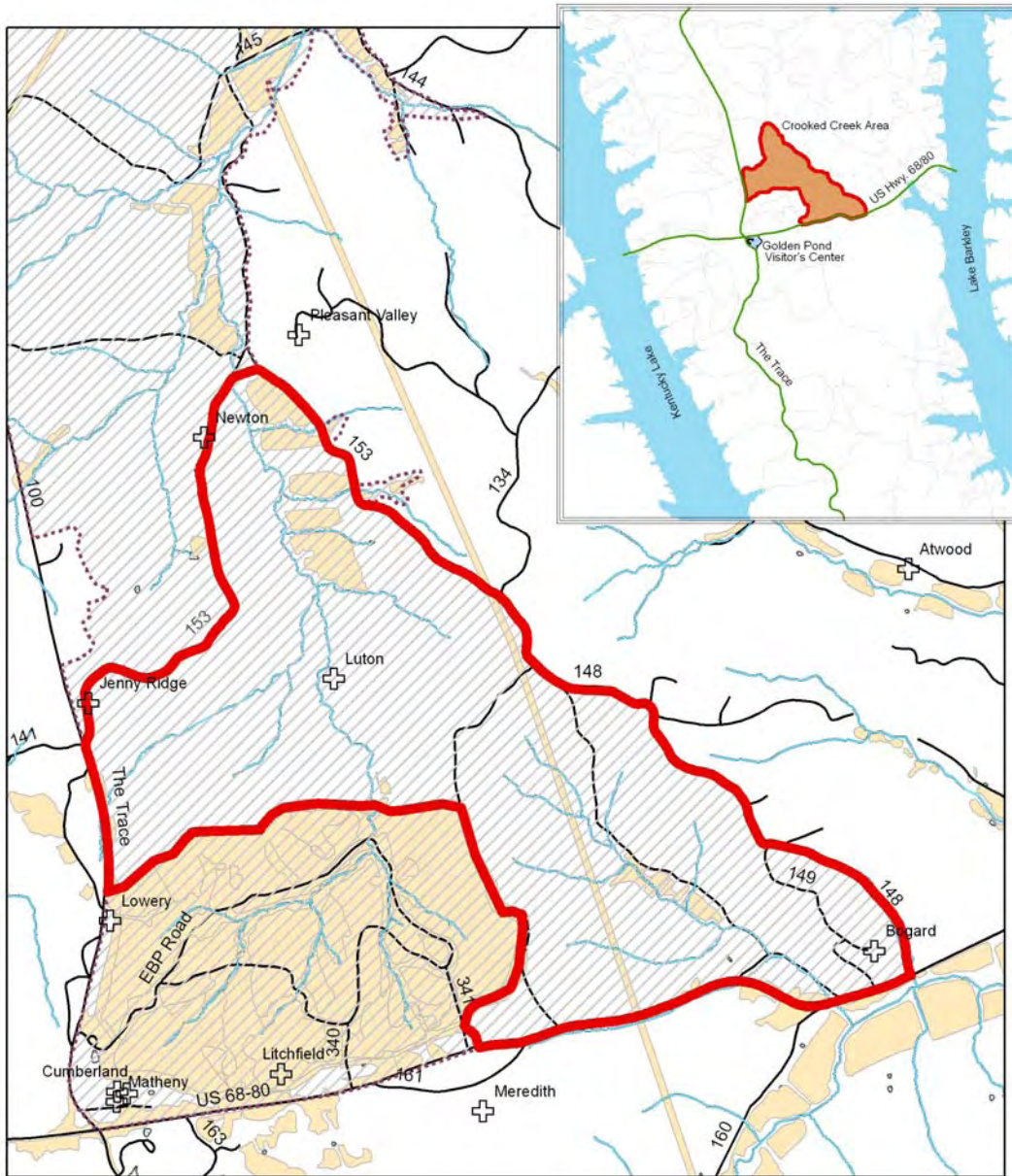
How to Comment

For the Crooked Creek project, please send comments by e-mail in common digital format to: comments-southern-land-between-lakes@fs.fed.us; please include "Crooked Creek" 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.**

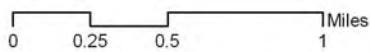
Approved by:

/s/ William P. Lisowsky

WILLIAM P. LISOWSKY
Area Supervisor



Crooked Creek Prescribed Fire Project Area



Legend

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