

Minutes

July 11, 2006 Pine Rockland Working Group Meeting

A short PRWG meeting took place from 2:30 to 4:30 at FIU's Kovens Conference Center after completion of the Pine Rocklands Hazardous Fuels Management Workshop that was coordinated by the USFS.

1. Debrief from Pine Rockland Conference 2006 and discussion about the 2008 event. After a brief recap the group concluded that the 2006 Conference format was ideal and should be replicated in 2008. This will include a day of optional field trips to pine rockland sites followed by a day of presentations and discussion on current topics and an evening poster session/social. Cost of this event was \$2300 for room rental and food and it was paid for by FIU and TNC with field trip transportation provided by Miami-Dade County at no charge. In order to continue the tradition of making this a free event PRWG participants are encouraged to look ahead to their 2008 budgets and set aside funding for the conference. Thanks to all those who participated in planning and implementing this conference and thanks as well to the presenters and field trip leaders for their efforts.

The group also supported the continuation of the Bahamas Workshop component of the 2006 Conference. Having visited Abaco to workshop fire management planning for the Abaco National Park (see below) it was suggested that in 2008 the workshop should take place on Andros which supports the largest area of pine forest in the country and a newly designated national park with fire management concerns. Cost for the 2 day/ 3 night workshop on Abaco was \$300/person for lodging, ground transportation and most meals, plus airfare. This is a good rough estimate for a workshop of a similar duration on Andros. Save your pennies.

2. Science committee update and discussion. Joe O'Brien will circulate the draft annotated bibliography on fire/fuels management that has been compiled to date for the USFS Hazardous Fuels Management project. PRWG members are encouraged to send additions, including gray literature, to Joe. Jim Snyder offered to add other pine rockland literature that is not fire/fuels management oriented to Joe's draft to create the first iteration of the pine rockland bibliography that this committee has been working towards.

The committee has settled on standard recommendations for photographic monitoring and prescribed fire operational monitoring. It is still working towards recommendations for fire effects monitoring and it was suggested that this should be a focus of the next PRWG meeting. The need to identify monitoring objectives was discussed. Jim Snyder will take the lead on bringing this to closure at/following the next meeting with support from Chris Bergh and others.

3. Outreach committee update and discussion. Alison Higgins reported that TNC Keys Program has received a contract to supply fire and pine rockland-oriented outreach materials (i.e. brochures and displays) and services (i.e. workshops and mailings) to the National Key Deer Refuge. These materials will be very much like what the outreach committee has suggested for the PRWG and should be readily adaptable.

4. Roundtable. Suzanne Koptur recently utilized the burned and unburned portions of Coral Reef Park as the backdrop for instruction in ecology and evolution to elementary, middle school and high school teachers.

Mike Ross and Jay Sah expect that the paper that Jay presented at the PR Conference, "Fuel loads, fire regimes and post-fire fuel dynamics in Florida Keys pine forests." will be published in

the International Journal of Wildland Fire this fall. They are working on three other papers based on the Keys data.

5. Review of the Abaco National Park Fire Management Plan outline and draft goals. The draft vision statement, goals and a list of research and partnership opportunities generated during the Abaco Workshop were discussed and approved. See below. Everglades NP has satellite imagery available that may include relevant portions of the Bahamas. Contact Rick Anderson.

The main topic of discussion was the installation of a permanent fire break in the pine forest, west of the pine forest-broadleaf forest ecotone, to enable Rx fires to be set east of the break during conditions that do not favor fire spread into the broadleaf forest. The goal of this strategy would be to eliminate or minimize the negative consequences of uncontrolled, human-caused fires during the dry season that originate in the pine forest but spread to the broadleaf forest. It is agreed that this is basically the way to go but the strategy needs refinement.

Draft Vision Statement - Ten years from now appropriate fire management, which includes cultural fire use and targeted application of fire management techniques (e.g. prescribed fire, fire suppression, prescribed natural fire, etc.), will support native species, culturally important species and natural communities in the Abaco National Park and throughout southern Abaco.

Draft Goals for the ANP Fire Management Plan

- Goal for Coppice: No more fire in coppice until its role is better understood
- Goal for Pine Forest: Promote structural diversity in the pine stand
- Goal for Pine-Coppice Ecotone: Maintain a dynamic ecotone (avoid abrupt community edges)
- Goal for Bahama Parrot: Understand role of fire in parrot reproduction, survival and foraging (e.g. nest sites, food supply, predations, roosting sites)
- Goal for Wetlands: Understand role of fire (research and monitoring)
- Goal for Other Birds: Understand role of fire (research and monitoring)
- Goal for Fire Management Capacity: Fire infrastructure, staffing, monitoring, etc. are adequate to accomplish goals and objectives
- Goal for Outreach: Existing fire users understand the FMP goals and participate in implementing them.

Research and Partnership Opportunities

- Expand scope, scale, replication of existing fire effects research burns
- GIS mapping of targets and fires
- Satellite mapping of targets and fires (Bahamas National GIS Center is working on this via their International Development Bank project).
- Map existing vegetation communities and pine stand structure
- Model fuels
- Quantify site productivity (e.g. elevation, soils, rainfall, depth to water table, etc.)
- Conduct baseline inventory (e.g. plants, birds, invertebrates, etc.)
- Refine conceptual model of forest ecosystem dynamics and fire's role into a mathematical model with predictive/decision-support capabilities
- Fire effects on parrots, other key targets and possibly indicators
- Identify indicator species (e.g. parrots, parrot food sources, pine trees, pine forest structure, cavity nesting birds, ecotonal species, Zamia, ants, herps)

6. Preview of the South Florida 2050 Fire Plan. TNC has been contracted by the SFWMD to develop a regional fire plan. This stems from recognition that Everglades restoration and other big picture goals for the region are not likely to be fully realized without a clear understanding of fire's role and protection/restoration of its central role in ecosystem and species management. Between now and October TNC will gather background information and data and produce a preliminary report and GIS-based maps that will serve as the foundation of this plan. Public and private lands will be included. Regionally important or strategic areas will be identified based on criteria such as species diversity, restoration needs, ecosystem requirements, protected species management and regional connectivity.

Information will be queried from landowners/managers through online and mail-out questionnaires. Telephone and/or in-person interviews or on-site inspections may be needed in some instances. PRWG members are encouraged to participate if approached for information. Some information needs include;

1. Fire management programs in the region.
2. Wildland fire management resources available in the region (equipment, personnel and training status).
3. Recent fire management activity and budget trends (10-year activity status).
4. A comparison of what is needed to meet ecosystem management requirements and what is being accomplished. This represents a comparison between the frequency and severity needed to maintain an ecosystem type (based on research and expert opinion) and the frequency and severity that is currently used to manage the system.
5. An inventory of regulations and policies affecting fire management in the region.
6. A discussion of the ability of fire managers to work across jurisdictional boundaries.

The second phase of plan development is expected to involve filling information gaps, expert meetings/workshops and draft review.

7. The PRWG web page has been updated thanks to USGS's Jim Snyder and Roy Sonenshein. Visit this web address to find past meeting minutes, relevant documents, photos, presentations and notes from the 2004 and 2006 conferences - <http://fl.water.usgs.gov/Miami/pineland/>.