

Florida
State Parks

9

JUNIOR
RANGER

FRIENDLY FLAMES

Name _____

Date _____ Park _____

The plants and animals living in Florida's upland habitats have adapted over many thousands of years to live with frequent natural lightning fires. As those habitats have been altered over time, fire cannot spread as it once did. This has made prescribed burning necessary.

So, just like your doctor prescribes medicine to keep you healthy, Park Rangers prescribe fire to keep habitats healthy. Park Rangers are trained to diagnose the specific needs of habitats and use scientific techniques which mimic natural fire to improve the habitat's health.

WHAT DOES
THIS MEAN?

Let's break it down.

There are many different benefits of using prescribed fire:

- 🔥 It prevents dense shrubs and trees from taking over—increasing visibility and making room for animals to live.
- 🔥 It stimulates healthy plant growth.
- 🔥 It prevents the buildup of heavy, woody fuels which limits wildfires.

If an unhealthy habitat is not treated, it can develop serious conditions:

- 🔥 It will become too crowded with plants which can limit a diverse population of wildlife.
- 🔥 Plants will compete with one another for sunlight and nutrients and eventually some will be eliminated.
- 🔥 There is a greater danger of uncontrolled wildfire.



An unplanned fire can be a deadly force and can destroy lives and property. Just as only your doctor can prescribe you medicine, only a trained Park Ranger can prescribe a fire in a Florida State Park. Both go through years of training, learning how and when to treat their patients.

There is more this way!



NATURAL RESOURCES ACTIVITY

FRIENDLY FLAMES

The pictures below show an overgrown habitat which has been neglected and a habitat which is maintained with prescribed fire. Circle and count the animals you find, then answer the questions about the habitat below.



Overgrown

This habitat has not been properly maintained with fire. Wildlife has been crowded out and smaller plants have no room to grow.

Number of Animals _____

Maintained

This habitat is thriving with diverse wildlife and native plants thanks to prescribed fire.

Number of Animals _____

Which habitat is healthier? Why?

Do you see evidence of a recent prescribed fire at the park you are visiting? Read the words below. Circle the signs of prescribed fire you see and write down any other evidence in the blanks.

Bare Ground

New Growth

Ash

Smoke

Charred Tree Trunks

Brown Leaves on Trees
