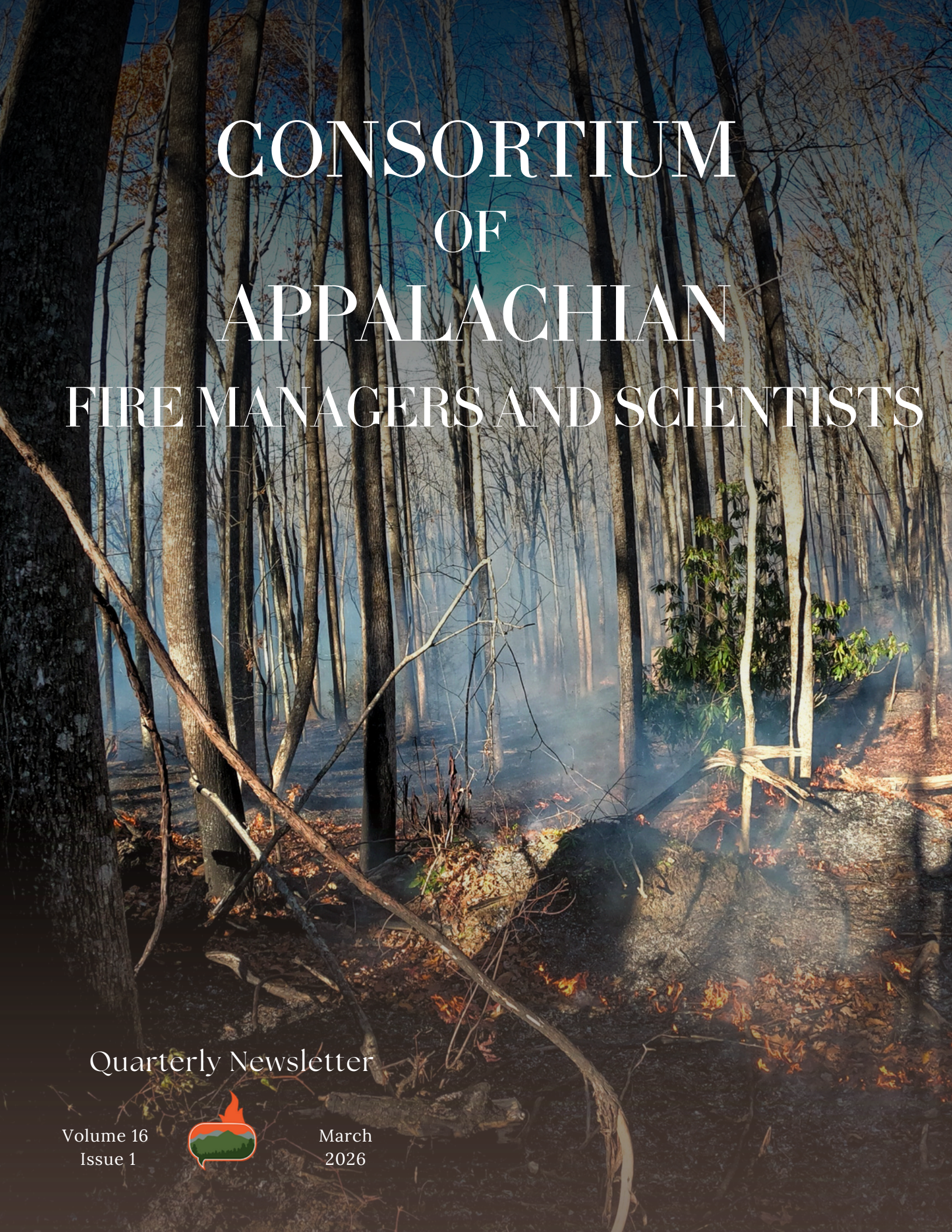

CONSORTIUM OF APPALACHIAN FIRE MANAGERS AND SCIENTISTS

Quarterly Newsletter

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Pulaski County Emergency Management

Awarded the 2026 Wildfire Mitigation Award

The Award is in recognition of their exemplary dedication to community wildfire risk reduction

Will be formally recognized at the 2026 Wildland-Urban Interface Conference



Photo: Wiki Commons: File:Aerial photograph of the Little River at Snowville, Virginia

To demonstrate the tremendous value of community wildfire risk reduction, the Wildfire Mitigation Awards were launched in 2014 by a collaborative coalition including the National Association of State Foresters(NASF), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and the USDA Forest Service.

Pulaski County Emergency Management (located in Southwestern Virginia), in honor of their exemplary efforts and dedication to community wildfire risk reduction, have been awarded the 2026 Wildfire Mitigation Award. Their unwavering commitment to minimizing the impact of emergencies and disasters on the people, property, environment, and economy of Pulaski County led them to earning this prestigious award.

Pulaski County Emergency Management worked with community organizations and local governments in Virginia, conducting controlled burns on public and private lands. They partnered with Virginia Tech's Fire Ecology program, working alongside Dr. Adam Coates, providing students the opportunity to gain valuable insight into wildfire mitigation through empirical, data - driven research. They deepened local community relationships by redirecting wood from fuels mitigation efforts to a a church-run firewood bank. Pulaski County Emergency Management was one of twelve recipients to be honored with the 2026 Wildfire Mitigation Awards. Recipients of the award come from across the country where local community - based actions drive national innovative and strategic changes.

Heartfelt congratulations to Brad Wright and the entire Pulaski County Emergency Management team on their remarkable accomplishments and for receiving such a prestigious award. Their dedication to the community is truly commendable.



Image Source: Pulaski County Facebook page

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons - Map of Virginia Counties and Independent Cities

All About DUFF



Duff in the Mountains Fire Science Workshop

CAFMS, in partnership with the Southern Fire Exchange, hosted the Duff in the Mountains Fire Science Workshop on February 24, 2026. The workshop was held in Hendersonville, NC at the Henderson County Center NC Cooperative Extension. Speakers included Adam Warwick (Southern Blue Ridge Fire and Stewardship Manager, The Nature Conservancy), Jonathan McCall (North Carolina Wildlife Resources), Ryan Jacobs (North Carolina Wildlife Resources), Mac Callaham Jr. (Southeast Climate Hub, Forest Service Southern Research Station), and Armin Weise (Research Assistant, Clemson University).



Image: Armin Weise and Mac Callaham show duff samples at Green Rive Game Lands Source: Lindsey Hosier

The goal of this workshop was to connect fire and land managers with scientists, researchers, and peers working on addressing duff fire science issues. The workshop exposed different challenges associated with fire exclusion, fuel accumulation, duff fire management, and ecosystem restoration, while also showcasing adaptive management strategies. During the field trip to Green River Game Lands, participants were able to see and feel duff, while also seeing the different fuels in control vs. managed burn units. The active participation and insightful questions brought forth from the participants made for a truly collaborative experience. The positive energy and engagement of the group underscore the need for continued duff research and future workshops.

Recording of the speakers presentations can be found on the **CAFMS YouTube Channel**.



Image: Touring Green River Game Lands. Source: Lindsey Hosier

"This immediately helps with objectives of an upcoming burn I have planned."

Events



Duff in the Sandhills Fire Science Workshop

Image: Participants looking at duff in Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve: Lindsey Hosier

Duff in the Sandhills Fire Science Workshop is the second of three workshops in the Duff Series co-hosted by CAFMS and the Southern Fire Exchange. This workshop was hosted in Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve. The intent of this workshop was to provide participants with a greater understanding of what duff is and its correlation with fire exclusion, how to mitigate restoration challenges associated with duff, and how to conduct prescribed burns in areas with high accumulation of duff while mitigating delayed mortality.

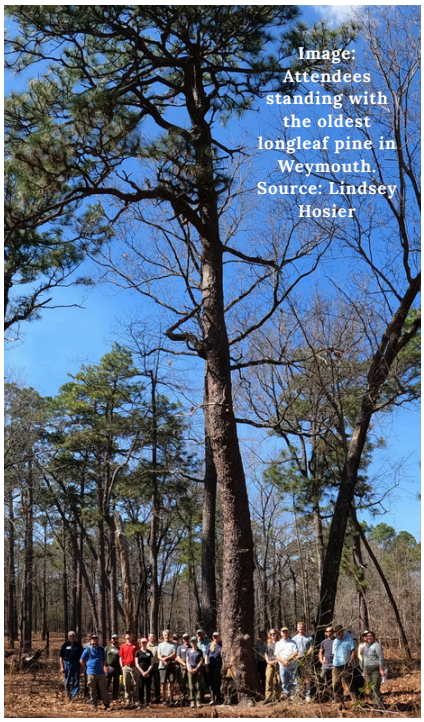

Image: Attendees standing with the oldest longleaf pine in Weymouth. Source: Lindsey Hosier

Speakers included Rae Crandall (Ph.D. Associate Professor, University of Florida and Southern Fire Exchange), Deb Maurer (Southeast Coastal Plain Program Director, The Nature Conservancy), Jimmy Dodson (Regional Biologist, NC State Parks), Thomas Crate (Fire Management Officer, NC State Parks), and Jason Haywood (Burn Coordinator, Piedmont Region, NC State Parks). Special thanks to Triangle Land Conservancy in Durham, NC for making this workshop possible through their generous sponsorship.

"I will use the resources and lecture info to improve and increase healthy long leaf pines and overall ecosystem and native plant health on my land."

The field trip was held in Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve at the Boyd Tract. To our surprisee, the unit was burned the previous day, allowing participants to view duff smoldering in real time. During the field trip, we were able to differentiate the O - horizon sequence (Oi, Oe, Oa organic soil horizons), while also observing the gradual reduction of duff over time.



Image: O - horizon sequence Source: Lindsey Hosier

We had strong engagement, with one participant traveling to attend from Texas! The participants were fully immersed and asked thought-provoking questions, enriching a collective learning atmosphere. The speakers seamlessly delivered high-level subject matter with a welcoming approach, fostering an environment where everyone could be engaged.

APPALACHIAN SPOTLIGHT



Image: Virginia Greene on a prescribed fire. Source: Virginia Greene

BLENDING ART AND SCIENCE

Virginia Greene's journey into prescribed fire



Image: Morel mushrooms. Source: Virginia Greene

"I love knowing that my work makes a positive difference for my local landscape every day."



Image: Prescribed burn in a grassy field. Source: Virginia Greene

Resources

The Appalachian region is a global biodiversity hotspot, with its ecological richness mirrored by a diverse community of stewards. CAFMS footprint spans most of the Appalachian region, providing the opportunity to collaboratively work with many managers and scientists. In this newsletter, we highlight Virginia Greene and the amazing work she is doing.



Q: What is your title and what agency do you work for? How long have you been with the agency?

I'm Virginia Greene and I'm the South River Restoration Projects Specialist with Virginia DCR Natural Heritage, based out of the Shenandoah Valley Region. I have been in this role since 2022, but with DCR since 2020.

Q: How did you get into this career field?

I took a somewhat circuitous path to get into land and habitat management. I have always loved nature and making art, and so I studied biology and scientific illustration in college and grad school. After receiving an MS focused on bird behavior, I worked as a nature artist for several years. I wanted to get back into more outdoors work, as well as be more directly involved in protecting and caring for my local ecosystem, so I served as a Natural Resource Management Americorps member with Virginia State Parks in 2020—learning about prescribed fire, invasive management, and how to wrangle a lot of different equipment. I was hired with Virginia State Parks after my service year. Eventually I took the South River role with Natural Heritage, where I am happily working to protect and create habitat for native organisms in the Shenandoah Valley - rare, threatened, and common alike - especially with fire.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your line of work?

Almost everything! I love being outside so often. I love the day-to-day and season-to-season variety. I love that I am always getting to learn new things (currently learning to fly drones). I love knowing that my work makes a positive difference for my local landscape every day. I love the unpredictable aspects of it—problem-solving on the fly, wildlife encounters, reacting to changes in weather, and so on. I also love working with like- minded collaborators, especially on

prescribed burns. It's a fantastic feeling to see how all the fire-line prep and coordination comes together on the day of the burn, and to carry out such crucial (and fun) management actions with some of my favorite people.

Q: What is the biggest challenge you face in your line of work?

There is always so much to do, or that you could be doing, and sometimes it's tough to prioritize (though during fire season it suddenly becomes easy!). There's also the knowledge that particularly with invasives, we're fighting a Sisyphean battle—one that is unintentionally made worse by well-meaning folks planting or allowing invasives to grow on their properties. Hopefully here in Virginia some of the bills currently up for discussion in the General Assembly can make a difference with that issue.



Q: What is the most valuable lesson you have learned? Is there something you have learned that has taken you by surprise?

The two most valuable lessons I've learned are that 1) being humble and willing to learn goes a very long way and 2) problem-solving is one of the most important skills a person can develop. These apply everywhere, but especially in this field.

I think I was really surprised to learn how few people are involved in managing public lands across Virginia, relative to the number of acres there are to manage. We get a lot done—but I hope more and more people can enter this line of work, so we can get even more done for our landscape!









Q: What advice would you offer someone entering into this field?

Whether you're a recent graduate or you are switching fields, get creative about gaining new skills—get involved with your local public lands as a volunteer, connect with your local Master Naturalists, take a Virginia Prescribed Burn Manager course. Pick up skills and experience with plant ID, invasive management, prescribed fire, and if possible, a variety of types of equipment. Absorb as much as you can and try out as many aspects of the work as you can. And don't discount the importance of networking and people skills. A previous supervisor told me once that "you're always being interviewed", and I've taken that to heart. Anyone you meet in this field could be a colleague someday, so be willing to take initiative and work hard. Being curious and can-do goes a long way in standing out to potential employers and collaborators.

Q: What has been the most rewarding moment?

This is a hard one, because there are so many rewarding moments. A few include…

- Visiting Mount Joy Pond NAP over the years, and watching it go from the same dense, shaded out forest characteristic of the unmanaged and fire - suppressed forests around it, to a thriving open-woodland condition, through both fire and selective timber thinning. Finding a Pink Lady's Slipper inside the unit where we'd burned a month before.

- Wandering Cowbane Prairie NAP to hunt for invading sprigs of *Sericea lespedeza* a few months after a burn, and seeing the riot of color and action of frogs, spiders, pollinators, and native plants everywhere.

-Helping to successfully suppress a potentially disastrous spot fire on a prescribed burn with our inter-agency fire crew, and all the discussions about how to respond even better the next time that happens.

- Every time I can help a member of the public understand what prescribed burning is and why why it is important, and I see their expression change as they "get" it.

- Discovering a patch of the biggest morels I've ever seen right on the section of fire line I was assigned to hold. (And then eating some of them for dinner that night!)

Q: Outside of work, what do you enjoy doing with your time?

I have too many interests for one person's time! I still draw and paint for fun (sometimes comics about burning!). I love reading—fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, etc.—and I write short fiction stories about birds. Obviously, I enjoy being outside - hiking, birding, hunting, and swimming, depending on the time of year. Staying fit is a work requirement, but I also really enjoy it—especially lifting and yoga. I'm slowly teaching myself the banjo, and hope to find a jam group to play and sing with one of these days. Most of all, though, I enjoy spending time with my son and husband (ideally doing one of the above activities!).

Top Image: Spring Peeper
Middle Left Image: Yellow Garden Spider
Middle Right Image: Crew Logo designed by Virginia Greene
Lower Left Photo: Pink Lady Slipper
Lower Right: Sand Table Training
All Image Credits: Virginia Greene

2025 Appalachian Fire Science Publications

Below are 2025 publications pertaining to fire science across the Appalachian region. All publications can also be found on our website.

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Conferences

International Fire Behavior and Fuels Conference

April 28 - May 1, 2026

Hobart, Tasmania

The 8th International Fire Behaviour and Fuels Conference offers a forum where past Fire Management experience and lessons learned are documented, current work showcased, and emerging research, innovation and techniques on fire management shared, towards developing integrated solutions to these challenges.
This conference provides an opportunity to showcase how different countries can implement newly developed fire management policies and frameworks at national, regional and local levels to address fire risks and build resilience. The Conference will unite policy makers, scientists, fire managers and Indigenous land stewards for a shared purpose and a different future living with fire.

For more information visit the conference website.

Georgia Prescribed Fire Council Annual Meeting

June 6, 2026

Chattahoochee Technical College in Jasper, GA

Prescribed fires are used by a variety of individuals, agencies, and organizations throughout the state. In 2003, a group of stakeholders came together to establish the Southwest Georgia Prescribed Fire Council in a regional effort to encourage the exchange of information, techniques, and experience among practitioners. These efforts quickly garnered interest by other regions in the state, and in 2007, the organization became a statewide effort – the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council. Today the Council is made up of a diverse group of private, state, and federal partners working together to advocate and educate for the increased use of prescribed fire throughout Georgia.For more information visit the **Georgia Prescribed Fire Council website.**

North American Forest Ecology Workshop

June 23 - 26, 2026

Missoula, Montana



The mission of the North American Forest Ecology Workshops is "to bring researchers, academicians, and managers together to foster dialogue and discussion of current issues related to basic and applied research in forested ecosystems in North America." Since first starting in 1993,

NAFEW is now held every two years. This conference will host plenary talks, scientific presentations, and field trips exploring the science and management of how to create and maintain resilient forest ecosystems and the human communities embedded in them. Focusing on innovative science, partnerships, and creative management, the conference will host topics on ways to foster forest communities that are resilient to climate stress, disturbance, and societal change. All topics related to forest ecology and management are welcome. Registration is now open.

For more information visit the **NAFEW 2026 website**.



Eastern Native Grasslands Symposium

October 13 - 16, 2026

Hopkinsville, KY

The Eastern Native Grasslands Symposium is is a biennial gathering made possible by the growing interest and collaboration of a diverse community dedicated to native grasses, forbs, and wetland plants of the eastern United States. This community includes restorationists, landscape architects, ecologists, landowners, forage producers, biologists, wildlife and pollinator enthusiasts, private consultants, government agencies, seed and plant producers, and many others.
For more information visit the **Eastern Native Grasslands website**.

15th Biennal Longleaf Conference

October 25-29, 2026

Willamsburg, VA

THE LONGLEAF ALLIANCE

The Biennial Longleaf Conference, sponsored by The Longleaf Alliance, is a regional conference that is focused on the restoration and conservation of the longleaf ecosystem that once dominated the landscape within the southeastern United States. The conference provides the opportunity for people from all over the southeast to get together, share, learn, and celebrate longleaf. It also serves as a rallying spot for several other organizations and government agencies seeking to stage additional events in order to better collaborate on the conference topics.

For more information visit the Longleaf Alliance website.

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ENDS APRIL 1ST



Fire in Eastern Oak Forests
A Fire Science and Management Conference

June 2-4, 2026

Bloomington, Indiana - Monroe Convention Center

The Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference is an important conference focused on fire science and management in oak forests, woodlands, and savannas where noted experts in research and management gather to present state-of-the-art information, perspectives, and syntheses on key issues. This conference will emphasize topics relevant to management of oak-dominated forests, woodlands, and savannas and will be of interest to managers, scientists, landowners, consultants, and students.

For more information visit the conference website

Duff in the Coastal Plain Fire Science Workshop



This is the last duff workshop of the series! We hope to see you there!

April 15, 2026
8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Carolina Beach State Park, NC
Registration

Resources

JOBS

- Forest Stewards Guild is hiring for a Southeast Region Coordinator - Application
- The Longleaf Alliance is hiring a Longleaf Forester - Application due March 27
- The Nature Conservancy North Carolina is hiring a Sandhills Burn Crew Member - Application
- The Nature Conservancy North Carolina is hiring a Forest Conservation Technician - Application
- The Land Trust Alliance is hiring a Fire Management Specialist - Application
- The Ember Alliance is hiring Blacksburg, VA Prescribed Fire and Fuels Crew Members and Lead - Application
- The Ember Alliance is hiring both a Fuels Monitoring Module Assistant and Leader in Greenville, SC - Application

TRAININGS

- RX 310 - Introduction to Fire Ecology Southern Appalachians - Registration Form
- The Ember Alliance Wildland Fire Academy Fort Collins, CO - Registration

WEBINARS

- Yale Forest Forum - From Timber to Tomorrow: Old Challenges, New Pressures, Changing Paradigms: Occurs every Tuesday 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m EST: Registration
- April 2, 2026: Fire and Fire Surrogate Studies and SageSTEP: The Benefits of Long-Term Fire Research Webinar: Registration
- April 9, 2026: North Atlantic Fire Science Exchange Student Webinar Series - Digging Deeper: The Mutual Exchange of Operational and Academic Intelligence: Registration
- April 16, 2026: North Atlantic Fire Science Exchange Student Webinar Series - Fire Effects on Hydrology in Forest Soils of the Northeastern United States: Registration
- April 23, 2026: North Atlantic Fire Science Exchange Student Webinar Series - A Spot Across the Pond: Wildland Firefighting in Germany and Europe: Registration
- May 6, 2026: University of Wisconsin Stevens Point: Tree-Ring Fire-Scar History of the Northeastern U.S. Registration

RESOURCES

- Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program - Information

RESEARCH

- Zong, X., Wang, X., Coogan, S.C.P. et al., (2025). Effectiveness of firebreaks: a review. *Fire Ecology*, 22, Article 17. https://doi.org/10.1186/s42408-026-00451-1

We value your continued support and feedback!

Find us on Facebook: Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists

Find us on YouTube: Appalachian Fire - CAFMS

Website: www.appalachianfire.org

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A Member of the JFSP
Fire Science Exchange Network