

Conservation Solutions for your Pennsylvania Farm

Technical Help Is Available

Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can assist you in assessment and planning for prescribed burning to achieve your conservation objectives. Detailed instructions are also available concerning different aspects of prescribed fire. They can also help you develop a Conservation Plan to solve other issues you have identified on your farm.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply call your local office at the number listed below to set up an appointment for someone to come to your farm.

You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance through state or federal programs. Your NRCS office will explain various programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.



NRCS FIELD OFFICES:

Adams: 717-334-4216 ext 3	Dauphin: 717-921-2380 ext 3	Monroe: 570-282-8732 ext 3
Allegheny: 724-482-4800 ext 3	Delaware: 610-466-7502 ext 3	Montgomery: 215-453-9527 ext 3
Armstrong: 724-545-1022 ext 3	Elk: 814-375-2125 ext 3	Montour: 570-784-1062 ext 3
Beaver: 724-482-4800 ext 3	Erie: 814-796-6760 ext 3	Northampton: 610-625-8392 ext 3
Bedford: 814-623-7900 ext 3	Fayette: 724-437-7971 ext 3	Northumberland: 570-286-7114 ext 3
Berks: 610-372-4655 ext 3	Forest: 814-226-8160 ext 3	Perry: 717-582-4144 ext 3
Blair: 814-695-6291 ext 3	Franklin: 717-264-8074 ext 3	Pike: 570-282-8732 ext 3
Bradford: 570-265-6969 ext 3	Fulton: 717-485-3812 ext 3	Potter: 814-274-8166 ext 3
Bucks: 215-453-9527 ext 3	Greene: 724-627-5821	Schuylkill: 570-622-1312 ext 3
Butler: 724-482-4800 ext 3	Huntingdon: 814-627-1626 ext 3	Snyder: 570-837-0007 ext 3
Cambria: 814-472-5502 ext 3	Indiana: 724-463-8547 ext 3	Somerset: 814-445-6876 ext 3
Cameron: 814-375-2125 ext 3	Jefferson: 814-375-2125 ext 3	Sullivan: 570-265-6969 ext 3
Carbon: 570-779-0645 ext 3	Juniata: 717-436-8953 ext 3	Susquehanna: 570-278-1011 ext 3
Centre: 570-726-3196 ext 3	Lackawanna: 570-282-8732 ext 3	Tioga: 570-724-1726 ext 3
Chester: 610-466-7502 ext 3	Lancaster: 717-299-5361 ext 3	Union: 570-524-2549
Clarion: 814-226-8160 ext 3	Lawrence: 724-662-3740 ext 3	Venango: 814-226-8160 ext 3
Clearfield: 814-375-2125 ext 3	Lebanon: 717-272-3908 ext 3	Warren: 814-723-1217
Clinton: 570-726-3196 ext 3	Lehigh: 610-625-8392 ext 3	Washington: 724-222-3060 ext 3
Columbia: 570-784-1062 ext 3	Luzerne: 570-779-0645 ext 3	Wayne: 570-282-8732 ext 3
Crawford: 814-724-1852 ext 3	Lycoming: 570-433-3902 ext 3	Westmoreland: 724-834-3970 ext 3
Cumberland: 717-249-1037 ext 3	McKean: 814-274-8166 ext 3	Wyoming: 570-836-2490 ext 3
	Mercer: 724-662-3740 ext 3	York: 717-755-2966 ext 3
	Mifflin: 717-248-9541 ext 3	



United States Department of Agriculture

Prescribed Burning

Conservation solutions for your Pennsylvania farm

Do you have problems with . . .

- Controlling undesirable vegetation?
- Low-quality or low-production forage?
- Few native plant communities in your pasture or woodland?
- Woody plant invasions into your pasture?
- Poor wildlife habitat?
- Excessive fuel loads contributing to increased wildfire risk?

If so, you should consider **prescribed burning!**

DEFINITION:

Prescribed burning is the intentional and controlled application of fire to a pre-determined area to reduce the risk of wildfire, improve wildlife habitat, control weeds, improve pasture or forest stand conditions, and improve forest health.

Why use it?

- To control undesirable vegetation, including woody plant invasion
- To prepare sites for planting or seeding
- To control plant disease and insects
- To improve wildlife habitat
- To improve forage production quantity and quality
- To remove slash and debris
- To enhance seed and seeding production
- To facilitate distribution of grazing and browsing animals
- To restore native plant communities
- To reduce wildfire hazards



IMPORTANT: Laws and Regulations

Prescribed burning has certain risks associated with it. Ensure that you have a detailed plan, the correct equipment, enough trained personnel, and a clear understanding of the applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Understand that you may be liable for damages caused by fire escaping from your property or improper smoke management. Before conducting the burn, develop liability and safety precautions.

BENEFITS OF PRESCRIBED FIRE:

Conducting a prescribed burn can improve your pasture for grazing, enhance wildlife habitat, and/or increase biodiversity on your land.

Grazing:

Burning has been used for the last 10,000 years to rejuvenate grasslands. Fire can be used to control brush and the encroachment of woody plants without harming the grasses, because their roots run deeper.

Photo: Chris Helzer, The Nature Conservancy



Forestry/Wildlife:

Prescribed fire can be used to clear dead under-story, promoting the growth of new vegetation that serves as beneficial habitat for wildlife species.

Photo: Shane Eia, USDA/NRCS



Plant Diversity:

Burning can be used to promote plant diversity in forests or in pastures. To the right is a picture depicting the difference between burned (right) and non-burned (left) pasture.

Photo: arfirenetwork.org



MAKE A PLAN

A prescribed fire plan is a site-specific implementation document that guides all aspects of the prescribed burn. Before conducting a prescribed burn, it is essential to make sure you have a detailed plan of action. Your local NRCS office or local experienced professional can help develop a plan that will protect your land, your neighbors, and your workers. The plan will assist you in achieving the goals you have for your property by outlining the acceptable parameters and correct conditions in which the prescribed fire should take place.

The plan should include:

- Location/description of burn area
- Objective/s of the burn
- Description of vegetation to be burned
- Burn area prep requirements
- Firebreak plans
- Smoke management plan
- Acceptable conditions for the burn
- Notification information
- The firing plan and procedure
- Identification of sensitive areas
- Permits needed
- Liability documentation
- Post burn evaluation plan and criteria

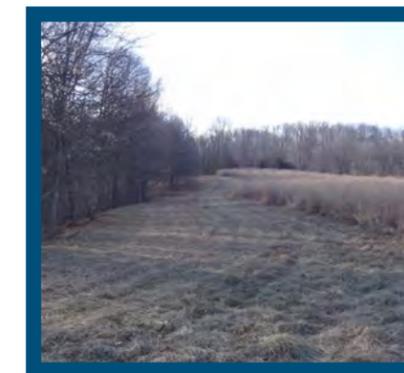
CONTROL: FIRE BREAKS

A firebreak is a strip of bare land or vegetation established or created to retard fire. They can be used to control the perimeters of a prescribed burn.

Firebreaks are useful temporary or permanent components of conservation and production systems that use prescribed burning. Firebreaks can be planned and implemented as proactive measures to control the perimeters of a prescribed burn. This practice is applicable on all land where fire is being used as a vegetation management tool. Fire breaks consist of fire-resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground, or any combination of the above. Locate firebreaks on the contour where practical to minimize the risk of soil erosion. Constructed firebreaks should tie into existing physical barriers. Firebreak construction must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, or permits.



Roadway



Vegetated Break



Plowed/Disked

Options:

1. **Roadway:** Either existing or newly constructed roads can be effective firebreaks if properly installed/maintained.
2. **Plowed, disked, or bladed land:** These strips should be located parallel to high-risk areas, such as railroads or utility lines, or parallel to property boundaries. Should be the width of the disk, Mathis plow, or blade. Plow immediately before burning.
3. **Burned firebreak:** Consist of two parallel plowed or disked strips (see above), each 5-feet wide, and a minimum of 20-feet apart. Burn the area between to create the firebreak.
4. **Vegetated firebreaks:** Consist of cool season grass or grass legume strips at least 30-feet wide within or adjacent to grass fields and 50-feet wide within forests. Vegetated firebreaks should be cleared of trees and scrubby growth. The land should be prepared and seeded according to the NRCS Firebreak Job Sheet.