

# Hazardous Fuels Reduction in Pine Oak Barrens

The Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation jointly initiated the Upper Mississippi River Watershed Fund. The Foundation funds projects that benefit the forests of the Upper Mississippi while improving wildlife habitat and water quality.

## Background

Wisconsin's northwest sands and central sand plains landscapes evolved in the face of frequent, low-intensity wildfires. Because humans have interfered with natural fire cycles, sandy soils on these sites foster the buildup of vegetation that helps fuel intense crown fires.

The publicly owned Burnett County Forest and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Buckhorn Wildlife Area are both pine-oak barrens designated as Conservation Opportunity Areas of Global Significance. Wisconsin's statewide *Assessment of Communities at Risk* shows that the majority of communities in the pine-oak barrens are at high or very high risk from wildfires.

Efforts are being made to lower the threat of wildfires by removing excess fuels, re-establishing fuel breaks, and returning pine-oak barrens to a more natural condition.

## Location

The project is located in the Burnett County Forest in Wisconsin and the Wisconsin DNR Buckhorn Wildlife Area.

## Goals

Project goals involve creating fuel breaks and restoring pine-oak barrens to:

- Reduce wildfire risk to protect public lands and adjacent communities
- Provide sites for plant and animal species in pine-oak barrens

## Results

Project personnel will use mechanical means and prescribed fires to create and maintain fuel breaks. Between 50 and 75 acres on the Buckhorn Wildlife Area will be restored to a native community of pine-oak barrens. Specific activities include:

- Mowing 140 acres of brush on the Burnett County Forest that encroach on the Clam fuel break and maintaining them using prescribed burning
- Re-establishing a 390-acre fuel break at Deer Lake
- Using prescribed burning to restore and maintain the 800-acre Meadman Meadow
- Restoring 350 acres of the Buckhorn Wildlife Area to pine-oak barrens by 2025

## Outcomes/Accomplishments

Besides greatly lowering wildfire risks, restoring the barrens and fuel breaks will provide habitat for "species of greatest conservation need," which include the Blanding's turtle, bull snake, four-toed salamander, bald eagle, upland sandpiper, gray wolf, northern flying squirrel, prairie vole, and white-tailed jackrabbit.

## Partners

Wisconsin DNR-Division of Forestry, Wisconsin DNR-Bureau of Facilities and Lands, Burnett County Forestry

## Grant Amount

\$ 127,360



For more information:

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