



**US Army Corps
Of Engineers**
Wilmington District

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Please visit our District website at <http://www.saw.usace.army.mil>

US Army Corps of Engineers Preparing to Conduct Controlled Burns

By: Robert Burick, Park Ranger

What is a controlled burn? A controlled burn is a planned fire, conducted by trained professionals, used to achieve specific natural resource objectives. Many types of plants and wildlife need fire to survive. Periodic fire stimulates growth, helps reproduction of plants, provides wildlife habitat, and ensures healthier natural areas around the lake. The US Army Corps of Engineers conducts controlled burns each year between the months of December and March. The burns are carried out on large portions of natural areas around the lake including: Wildlife Management Areas, timber tracts, and recreational sites.

Safety is the number one concern during all controlled burns. Well before a match is struck, the fire team considers the safety of people, property, and the natural areas they are managing. Safety considerations and preparations include:

- **Burn Plan:** a detailed plan is created for each specific burn that includes the burn objectives, plans for fire and smoke control, acceptable weather conditions, equipment and personnel needs, and contingencies for changing conditions.
- **Firebreak Construction:** wide corridors of cleared land that are free of burnable material are created around each burn area, ensuring that the fire does not leave the designated burn site.
- **Smoke Management:** controlled burns are conducted only when conditions will minimize the amount of smoke produced and its effect on people.
- **Certified Fire Team:** all of the controlled burns by the US Army Corps of Engineers at the John H Kerr Reservoir are conducted by trained professionals, certified by both North Carolina and Virginia Forest Service agencies.

The natural resource managers with the US Army Corps of Engineers conduct controlled burns for a number of reasons. Controlled burns help to reduce the hazardous buildup of vegetation, known as fuel, which if left unchecked could lead to a devastating wildfire that would threaten the local communities. Furthermore, many plant and animal species need fire to thrive. Controlled burns can help reduce competition, release seeds, add precious nutrients into the soil, and promotes beneficial plant species that attract wildlife. Controlled burns also play a large role in forest management where they are used for understory control, disease containment, and site preparation.

The following sites are scheduled to be burned during the 2016 controlled burn season. This list is subject to change based on weather and site conditions:

- Beaver Pond WMA
- Greenwood WMA
- Garretts Woods
- Beaver Woods
- Clover WMA
- Eagle Point
- Merifield WMA
- Oakleaf WMA

As members of the public who enjoy the John H Kerr Reservoir, the US Army Corps of Engineers hope you recognize the importance of controlled burning as a necessary tool used to protect you and your community and improve ecosystem health in the natural areas around the lake. Thank you for your understanding during the controlled burn season. **For additional information please contact the Visitor Assistance Center at 434-738-6143.**