

# Southern Illinois Interagency Habitat and Fuels Crew

## Spring 2021 Fire Report

After implementing only one prescribed burn in January and harsh winter weather in February, conditions quickly changed in March, leading to a very busy and productive spring season. The SIIHFC worked alongside of the Shawnee National Forest, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association, Shawnee RC&D, and crews representing the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service from Oregon, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana, and Missouri. When the smoke cleared, these collaborative and highly coordinated efforts eclipsed the record for acres burned in a fiscal year by the Shawnee National Forest set in FY19. This was a tremendously rewarding fire season that provided valuable experience to the Fuels Crew and Women In Fire fellows. We are proud to be a part of these great accomplishments and grateful for the trust, leadership, and mentorship of our partners.



Perimeter ignitions establishing black in the open lands portion of the Bebout Rx.



An interior action shot during the Double Branch Rx.



Left: Nathan displays a deadhead found while conducting interior ignitions at the Pleasant Valley Rx.  
Right: WIF Fellow, Emma Ensley, conducts perimeter ignitions at the Ramsey Branch Rx.



View from atop one of the waterfalls within the Jackson Hole Ecological Area, one of two natural areas in the Double Branch Rx.



A post-fire view of a rocky drainage found within the Beatty Branch Rx in Pope County. This 950-acre unit includes 150 acres of national forest land, with multiple private ownerships comprising the remaining acres. The Forest Service, IDNR - Division of Forestry, SIPBA, Shawnee RC&D, Rural Pope County Fire Protection District, out-of-state Bureau of Land Management personnel and TNC all worked together to implement this burn.



Multiple strips of fire come together in the Jackson Hole EA, part of the Double Branch Rx. Two 1,500-acre units were burned this spring using aerial ignition, the Gap View Rx and the Double Branch Rx.



WIF Fellows, Makenna Baxter (left) and Emma Ensley (right), on their first prescribed burn with the USDA Forest Service at the Bebout Rx on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



Fire wraps around a slough that was interior during the Boulder Slope prescribed burn at the Cache River State Natural Area.



A backing fire makes its way around one of the Kincaid mounds. The crew dotted the mounds up wind and let the fire make its way around the mounds against the wind. This allowed any wildlife seeking refuge on the mounds, a chance to escape during the prescribed burn as opposed to ringing the units quickly.



SIU Fire Dawgs Collaboration

Lake Murphysboro Rx

Tharran and Caleb are featured above after the Lake Murphysboro State Park Rx with SIU Fire Dawgs and Charles Ruffner – photo was taken by Ben Snyder. Caleb mentored several students during this burn and shared some holding techniques protecting picnic pavilions when winds picked up.



52 Acres burned with TNC assistance on SIPBA properties

Parson – Trigg Tower SIPBA Rx

Protecting a hunting blind during a SIPBA private land prescribed burn near Trigg Tower.



Left to right: Makenna Baxter, Ruth Campos and Emma Ensley assisting the Southern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association on private lands in Pope County.

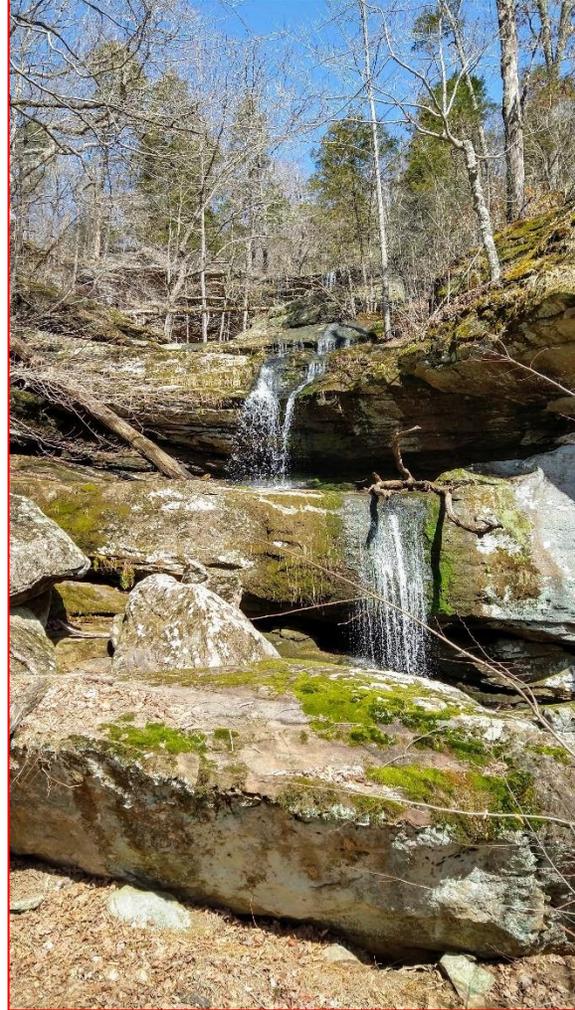
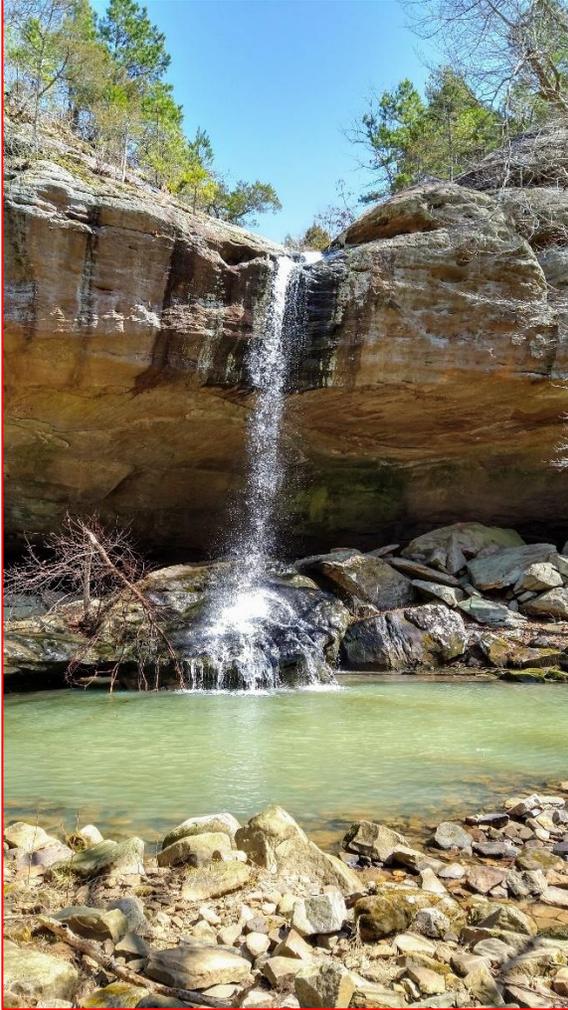
**Prescribed Burn Implementation:**

Date	Unit, Ownership	Acreage	Worker Days*
1/13	Dixon Springs, IDNR*	150	3
3/4	Bebout, USFS / Private*	130	1
3/4	Scott Raker, SIPBA / Private	40	1
3/5	Gibbons Creek West, USFS*	575	2
3/5	Saline County SFWA, IDNR	56	1
3/6	Ashby, USFS*	125	2
3/7	Joiner, USFS / Private*	336	1
3/8	Gap View, USFS / Private*	1,501	1
3/8	Cache River SNA Boulder Slope, IDNR	433	1
3/8	Ozark Hills Nature Preserve, IDNR	325	1
3/9	Whoopie Cat, USFS*	301	1
3/9	Trail of Tears State Forest, IDNR	344	1
3/20	Turpen, USFS	125	2
3/21	Ozark Hill Prairie, USFS*	1,235	3
3/22	Double Branch, USFS / Private*	1,500	3
3/24	Makanda Drury East, USFS / Private*	427	2
3/27	Parson, SIPBA / Private*	12	3

3/29	Condro, USFS / Private*	759	2
3/29	Lake Murphysboro State Park, IDNR	135	1
3/30	Lee Mine, USFS*	130	2
3/30	Kincaid Mounds, IDNR	30	1
4/1	Mill Creek, USFS / Private*	930	2
4/2	Ramsey Branch, USFS*	80	2
4/2	Sielbeck Woods Tree Planting, IDNR	150	1
4/3	Beatty Branch, USFS / Private	951	3
4/5	Cedar Lake Kudzu, USFS*	247	2
4/6	Pleasant Valley (Unit 1), USFS / Private*	350	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11,377</b>	<b>47</b>

**Burn Unit Prep (January 1<sup>st</sup> - March 19<sup>th</sup>):**

<b>Unit, Ownership</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Worker Days*</b>
Ashby/Quarrel Creek, USFS *	125	2
Bebout Expansion, USFS / Private lands	450	2
Cave Hill, USFS	1,200	1
Condro, USFS / Private *	750	5
Double Branch, USFS*	1,500	3
Gap View, USFS / Private lands	1,501	5
Gibbons Creek, USFS*	575	4
Hart Creek, USFS / Private lands *	560	5
Joiner, USFS / Private lands *	450	2
Lee Mine, USFS *	125	2
Pleasant Valley, USFS / Private lands	350	4
Ramsey Branch, USFS*	80	2
Trail of Tears State Forest, IDNR	344	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,010</b>	<b>38</b>



Waterfalls found within the Jackson Hole EA while preparing fire lines on the Double Branch Rx.

**Wildfire:**

Date	Incident	Acreage	Worker Days*
3/6/2021	Bassett Fire*	3	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

Shortly after wrapping up the Ashby Rx, Nathan and Ruth, along with the WIF fellows, supported Shawnee Fire resources in responding to the Bassett Fire in Hardin County. The fire started on private property and burned into a marked timber sale on national forest land. Local volunteer fire departments were already on-scene and had halted forward progression on arrival, so Shawnee and TNC personnel mopped up and secured the area.

## **Other:**

- **February 8<sup>th</sup>:** Caleb collaborated on the Illinois Prescribed Fire Council report and planning call with Illinois TNC Fire Manager Bill Kleiman.
- **February 9<sup>th</sup>:** Nathan and Ruth assisted Shawnee National Forest staff in teaching S-131 Firefighter Type 1 in Vienna.
- **February 22<sup>nd</sup>:** Nathan assisted Shawnee National Forest staff in teaching S-212 Wildland Fire Chainsaws at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center.
- **February 24<sup>th</sup>:** Nathan assisted Shawnee National Forest staff with S-212 field evaluations at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center.
- **February 26<sup>th</sup>:**
  - Nathan presented on the Southern Illinois Program's western fire work via Zoom for the McLean County SWCD's Prescribed Fire Workshop.
  - Caleb entered in all of the SIIHFC's burn assists online on TNC's Connect page for the 2020 burn season.
- **March 10<sup>th</sup>:** Nathan and Ruth, along with the WIF fellows, patrolled the Whoopie Cat Rx to ensure fire lines were secure the day following the burn. After the patrol, they spent the afternoon with a visiting Forest Fire Ecologist from the Dixie/Fishlake National Forests in Utah. They discussed fire effects and fuels monitoring, the roles of Fire Effects Monitors (FEMO) and Field Observers (FOBS) in prescribed and wildland fires and were given a hands-on demonstration of Brown's transects.
- **March 11<sup>th</sup>:** Ruth joined off-forest resources in patrolling the Whoopie Cat Rx.
- **March 31<sup>st</sup>:** Nathan and Ruth, along with the WIF fellows, patrolled the Lee Mine Rx to ensure fire lines were secure the day following the burn. After the patrol, they cleaned up a large oak tree that Nathan had to fell onto private property during the burn. The tree was outside the unit, but still caught an ember on a dead branch that was too high for pump units to extinguish. It was spotting into grassy fuels on the adjacent property, leaving felling as the only mitigation to ensure safety of nearby structures.

## Training:

- **January 27<sup>th</sup>**- Winter weather prevented field work, so the crew met with the Women In Fire fellows for an informal training day at the shop. Nathan led an in-depth conversation on chainsaw and hand tool maintenance with demonstrations of tools and techniques. Chainsaw safety, felling techniques and faller task books were also discussed.
- **February 2<sup>nd</sup>**: Nathan, Ruth, and Caleb completed the annual fire refresher (RT – 130) conducted by the Shawnee National Forest via Microsoft Teams. Nathan and Caleb also passed the annual work capacity test that day.
- **February 3<sup>rd</sup>**: Ruth completed First Aid / CPR / AED online refresher course through the American Red Cross.
- **February 4<sup>th</sup>**: Rain showers prevented field work, so Nathan and Ruth accompanied Emma and Makenna for an informal training day with the Vienna fire crew. The main topics of the day were medical scenarios (incident within an incident), engine operations, and using the belt weather kit to measure and record fire line weather. Medical topics included jump kits, command structure and roles within medical incidents, using the 8-Line Medical Incident Report (ICS 206 WF), medical reference materials within the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG), with demonstrations of backboard extrication and the application of splints and tourniquets. Engine topics included pump operations, apparatus fixtures, and mobile attack.
- **February 5<sup>th</sup>**: Nathan and Ruth completed TNC burn pile training via Zoom.
- **February 10<sup>th</sup>**: Caleb attended TNC's ILFO Fire Refresher training via Zoom.
- **February 11<sup>th</sup>**:
  - Nathan completed ICS-00200.c Basic Incident Command for Initial Response online through the FEMA Emergency Management Institute.
  - Ruth completed S-260 Interagency Incident Business Management online through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.
  - Caleb attended the Southern Fire Exchange's fire and COVID-19 online webinar.
- **February 12<sup>th</sup>**:
  - Ruth completed ICS-00200.c Basic Incident Command for Initial Response online through the FEMA Emergency Management Institute.
  - Ruth completed online defensive driving training via OnQ Safety.
- **February 15<sup>th</sup>**: Caleb worked with Matt Brickner on getting the WIF fellows profiles established on the IAT website for the S270 training they took.

- **February 16<sup>th</sup>:**
  - Nathan completed A-100 Basic Aviation Safety online through the Interagency Aviation Training website.
  - Ruth completed S-270 Basic Air Operations through a virtual training hosted by the Mark Twain National Forest.
- **February 17<sup>th</sup>:** Nathan completed S-260 Interagency Incident Business Management online through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.
- **February 25<sup>th</sup>:** Caleb attended the University of Illinois Extension virtual prescribed fire workshop and offered some input during the training event with Kevin Rohling and Chris Evans.
- **April 26<sup>th</sup>:** Nathan and Ruth walked Emma and Makenna through the process of updating their IQCS experience sheets. The crew led a discussion on preparing and packing for wildland fire assignments, with a demonstration of packing a red bag. Nathan developed a fire assignment packing list in Word for Southern Illinois Program members and discussed ways to personalize the list to meet individual needs.