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What's New

New Addition at Poison Springs



ANHC recently added 140 acres to [Poison Springs State Forest Sand Barren & Oak-Pine Forest Preserve](#). This addition brings the natural area's total acreage to 878. Located in Ouachita and Nevada counties, Poison Springs is jointly managed by ANHC, The Nature Conservancy, and the Arkansas Forestry Commission. [Click here to read more about our latest acquisition.](#)

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ANHC Commission Meeting

[Karen Smith](#), ANHC Director



Mr. Mike Wilson (left) and Mrs. Gay White (right) welcome commissioners, staff, and friends.

The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission held its first meeting of 2011 on Tuesday, February 8th. Commissioners, staff, and friends were welcomed at the Arkansas Field Office of the Nature Conservancy in Little Rock by its Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Mike Wilson, and Secretary, Mrs. Gay White.

The meeting's agenda included the election of the following slate of officers for 2011:

- Chairman Mark Karnes (Arkadelphia)
- Vice-chairman Ann Cornwell (North Little Rock)
- Secretary Curtis Adams, Jr. (Fort Smith)

The commission voted to approve the staff's proposed application for a Natural and Cultural Resources Council Grant to seek funding for field research, natural area stewardship, wayside exhibits, public use facilities, and additions to the System of Natural Areas. Commissioners also approved staff recommendations for cooperative agreements with conservation partners and natural area management plans, endorsed two opportunities for additions to the System of Natural Areas, and reviewed the 2nd quarter financial report.

In other business, fellow commissioners congratulated Robby Bevis of Lonoke for [winning](#) the Arkansas Farm Bureau's 2010 Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet. The meet provides a forum for young farm leaders to demonstrate their verbal and problem-solving presentation skills while they discuss their views on issues affecting agriculture. There were 15 competitors.

The next commission meeting takes place on May 10th at Mount Magazine State Park.

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Natural Features

Managing with Fire



Click above to watch video in our Multimedia Gallery.

For many years we have been taught that fire in the forest is bad. What we should have been taught is that *uncontrolled* fire in the forest is bad. Uncontrolled or wildfire can cause tremendous damage, but fire in the hands of a skilled professional can be a very effective natural resource management tool. Prescribed fire or controlled burning is fire applied in a knowledgeable manner to forest fuels on a specific land area under selected weather conditions to accomplish predetermined, well-defined management objectives.

The video above shows part of ANHC's burn crew using fire at [Lorance Creek Natural Area](#). And this month's newsletter features articles that will help explain how and why ANHC uses prescribed fire as a management tool. A detailed discussion guide on the ecology of fire can be downloaded by clicking [here](#) or by visiting the [Tools for Teaching](#) section of our website.

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Conservation Partnerships Cross State Lines

[Jonelle Doughty](#), ANHC Public Information Specialist



ANHC is excited to announce a partnership with a new prescribed fire contractor. This partnership was formed through an official request for qualifications for miscellaneous stewardship services on natural areas. As a result, four qualified, professional, and highly motivated contractors were selected. Those selected include The Nature Conservancy, Ozark Ecological Restoration, Equilibrium Inc., and a new face in the crowd, Chloeta Fire (CFI).

Based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, CFI was founded in 2008 by Mark Masters. The name Chloeta, pronounced "shuh-lay-tuh," comes from a small Cherokee community in northeastern Oklahoma. CFI is 100% American Indian owned and operated, and currently employs 35 people, more than half of which are tribal members. [Click here to read more about this unique company and their restoration work in Arkansas's System of Natural Areas.](#)

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Fire Dependent Species at Chesney Prairie

[Theo Witsell](#), ANHC Botanist



Chesney Prairie Natural Area

Prairies are defined as open grasslands dominated by characteristic herbaceous (non-woody) plants. Many prairie plant species are fire-dependent, meaning they depend on periodic fire to maintain the open prairie habitat they require. Fire in this landscape encourages the growth of herbaceous plants by limiting the growth of competing shrubs, small trees, and woody vines, and by allowing herbaceous plants to get a share of light, water and nutrients. Following a fire, sunlight on bare ground warms the soil, stimulating plant growth, seed germination, and soil microbial activity. Some seeds break dormancy following exposure to high temperatures during fire, and in some species, certain chemicals in smoke and ash signal seeds to germinate. [Click here to read about a rare, fire-dependent plant found at one of our natural areas.](#)

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Fighting Invasives with Fire

[Patrick Solomon](#), ANHC Land Management Specialist



Konecny Grove Natural Area

In the July 2010 edition of the Natural News, we discussed the devastating effects invasive plant species can have on Arkansas's rich biodiversity. [The article](#) featured invasive plant work

completed on 13 acres of Byrd Lake Natural Area where Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) was adversely affecting native plants. Management techniques used to combat the infestation included applications of chemical herbicides and the mechanical removal of privet using a machine known as a forestry mulcher. Along with chemical and mechanical treatments such as those used at Byrd Lake, fire is an important management tool in the fight against invasive plants.

Fire is very effective in reducing or removing many invasive species and promoting the growth of surrounding native vegetation. With careful planning, it can be a fast acting and environmentally friendly method for controlling some undesired plants. The biggest factor influencing the success of fire as an invasive plant removal tool is how well one understands the targeted species. [Click here to read how we are working to rid Konecny Grove Natural Area of invasive plants with the help of fire](#). This project is supported in part by the Arkansas Forestry Commission and the U. S. Forest Service.

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Calendar of Events

Central Arkansas Master Naturalist Monthly Meeting

3/17/2011
7:00pm

ANHC Chief of Research Bill Holimon will present to [Central Arkansas Master Naturalists](#) at their monthly meeting.

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Central Arkansas Master Naturalist Training

4/16/2011
All day

ANHC botanist Theo Witsell will be conducting training sessions in the classroom and in the field for [Central Arkansas Master Naturalists](#).

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ANHC Commission Meeting

5/10/2011

The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission will hold it's second meeting of the year at Mount Magazine State Park on Tuesday, May 10th. Time and other details TBD.

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Fire in Eastern Oak Forests

5/17/2011

The 4th Fire in Eastern Oak Forests Conference will be held May 17 to 19, 2011 at the University Plaza Hotel in Springfield, Missouri. This symposium will emphasize topics relevant to management of oak-dominated forests, woodlands and savannas and will be a great interest to managers, scientists, landowners, consultants and students. The theme of this conference will be "Managing Oak Woodlands & Savannas in the Forest-Prairie Region". The conference will feature 16 invited presentations and additional offered posters by scientists and managers on a wide range of topics. There will be a day of speakers, a field trip day, followed by a final day of speakers. Visit [the website](#) for more information.



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