



# Fire & Fuels



**Fire & Fuels Management 2002  
Point Reyes National Seashore and  
Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

## Fire Safety, Working Together

Safety is a top priority throughout the National Park Service. In standards for equipment use and protective gear, as well as proper training, communication, and visitor advisories, "Safety First" should be part of every employee's day-to-day decision making.

Firefighters regularly work in dangerous conditions and are particularly aware that safety is not just a personal choice. Safe practices protect not only oneself, but co-workers and neighbors as well.

The National Fire Plan emphasizes interagency cooperation and ecosystem management. Point Reyes National Seashore and Golden Gate National Recreation Area are working with local fire departments, residents, partners, and other land managers to reduce wildfire risk on park lands and surrounding communities.

Our greatest fire threats are from unplanned, human-caused ignitions. Wood stoves, cigarettes, fireworks, campfires, sparks from electrical equipment and automobiles, or even rocks bouncing on pavement can ignite an unplanned fire. Sadly, malicious intent also plays a hand in a significant number of wildfires caused by arson.

In addition to loss of human life and property that may occur during a wildfire, suppression tactics can cause enormous impacts to the natural and cultural resources that national parks were established to preserve.

Planned prescribed fire during controlled burns is one of the ways we can prevent large, catastrophic fires. Mechanical thinning of vegetation, and creating defensible space around structures and roads are other ways to reduce risk.

At the same time, fire is also a natural part of our ecosystems which we need to better understand.

Please join us in efforts to be FireSafe and FireWise in and around Point Reyes and Golden Gate!

Don Neubacher Superintendent Point Reyes NS	Brian O'Neill Superintendent Golden Gate NRA
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## Integrating Fire, Resources and Science: Estero Burns a Success

POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE HAS BEEN CONDUCTING prescribed burns since 1978. These burns have ranged from 1/2 an acre to 200 acres, in treatment areas up to 800 acres in size. Prescribed fire is used as a resource management tool on National Park Service lands to accomplish the following goals:

- 1) Reduce hazardous fuels.
- 2) Restore native ecosystems.
- 3) Control non-native plants.
- 4) Maintain cultural landscapes.

**A lot of time is spent planning a prescribed burn to ensure the number one fire management goal is achieved:**

**Provide for public and firefighter safety and the protection of property.**

There were no air quality problems during the burns. Smoke columns generally rose 1,000-2,000 feet and dispersed south along the coast.

The Estero burn units are located on the hills above Drakes Estero and consist primarily of grazed annual grassland with coyote brush dominated coastal scrub on slopes and ravines. Patches of iris, blackberry, rush, and scattered Scotch broom are distributed throughout. The purpose of these burns was to reduce hazardous fuels and eradicate non-native Scotch broom.

These goals were further defined by three objectives:

- 1) Reduce broom that has been cut and dried by 80%.
- 2) Achieve 60% mortality in live broom plants.
- 3) Provide an opportunity to conduct research on the effects of burning Scotch broom.

All three objectives were met. Mortality in live broom was dependent on fire intensity being great enough to scorch basal stems and destroy the growth tissue in the plants. The extent to which the broom mortality exceeded 60% will be determined with further post-burn fire effects monitoring.

A prescribed fire team from Yosemite National Park assisted Point Reyes Fire Management with conducting the burns. Additional support was provided by local firefighters from Marin County Fire Department and Inverness Volunteer Fire Department. These enhanced support measures adhere to changes in National Park Service policy established after the Cerro Grande Fire in New Mexico. The new guidelines require additional engines and personnel during all prescribed burns, significantly increasing fire safety standards.

The Estero Prescribed Burn Plan includes eight burn units totaling 423 acres. Dividing a treatment area into small burn units that can be burned in a single day provides for risk management with maximum control. Wind, temperature, relative humidity and air quality conditions are critical factors determining whether or not a burn will be conducted.

From November 5-9, 2001, the Estero Prescribed Burn Plan was implemented. Four units totaling 336 acres were successfully burned. This was the fifth time this area had been burned since 1993. The prescription for the Estero burns was temperatures from 45-85 degrees Fahrenheit, 30-80% relative humidity, and 3-12 mph wind speed. No burning was conducted on November 8 due to low relative humidity which was out of prescription at 26-29%.

### Hazardous Fuels



### Prescribed Fire



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