

SEMP Task 2-2.2: Percent of Pine and Pine-Hardwood Stands Treated with Prescribed Fire in ≤ 3 Years

One of the key tools for restoration and maintenance of longleaf pine ecosystems is prescribed fire. Because longleaf pine forests are fire-climax systems, fire is needed to suppress invading hardwood trees and maintain diverse herbaceous ground cover. Fort Polk and the Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) conduct prescribed burns on two to three year cycles to improve timber stands, remove unwanted understory vegetation, improve habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) and other wildlife, reduce dangerous fuel loads, and improve conditions for maneuver training exercises.

Task 2-2.2 assesses whether or not prescribed fire is applied at appropriate intervals to pine and pine-hardwood stands on Army and KNF training lands at Fort Polk, which represent current and potential habitat for the RCW. A performance target was established to complete prescribed burning for ≥ 90 percent of pine and pine-hardwood forest acres in ≤ 3 years and 100 percent of these acres in ≤ 5 years. Table 2-2.3 provides the acres burned and the percentage of the total pine and pine-hardwood acres burned (percent of total “burnable” acres) within 3- and 5-year intervals for FY 2007. Overall results for the Vernon Unit of the KNF were Amber (prescribed burning was completed for < 90% of pine and pine-hardwood forest acres in ≤ 3 years or < 100% of these acres in ≤ 5 years; and prescribed burning was completed for ≥ 80% of the area in ≤ 3 years and ≥ 95 % of the area in ≤ 5 years), and overall results for Army lands were Red (Prescribed burning was completed for < 80% of the pine and pine-hardwood forest acres in ≤ 3 years; or < 95% of these acres in ≤ 5 years). Combined results for Army and KNF lands were also Red because less than 95 percent of pine and pine-hardwood acres had been burned in 5 years or less.

These results are displayed graphically in Figure 2-2.2. Areas burned in less than or equal to 3 years are shown in green; areas burned in 3 to 5 years are shown in amber; and areas burned in greater than 5 years are shown in red. On the Fort Polk Main Post and KNF lands, most areas that were not burned within a 3-year interval were located in close proximity to private lands, military family housing, or training facilities that presented challenges to burning due to safety concerns. In other instances, burning was delayed on the Fort Polk Main Post, Peason Ridge and KNF lands because timber sales were planned within short timeframes. Burning in areas with pending timber sales would not be cost effective, because fire would remove the paint used to mark the sale boundaries. Burning was avoided in the northeastern portion of Peason Ridge due to ongoing construction of a live fire range facility in this area.

Table 2-2.2. Acres burned within ≤ 3 years and ≤ 5 years by management area.

| Management Area | Total Burnable Acres | Years Since Burn | Prescribed Fire Acres | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| | | | Acres Burned | Percent of Total Acres |
| Intensive Use Area | 39,616 | ≤3 | 36,805 | 92.9% |
| | | ≤5 | 39,523 | 99.8% |
| Limited Use Area | 43,397 | ≤3 | 32,552 | 75.0% |
| | | ≤5 | 41,076 | 94.6% |
| VERNON TOTAL | 83,013 | ≤3 | 69,357 | 83.5% |
| | | ≤5 | 80,599 | 97.1% |
| Fort Polk Main Post | 54,185 | ≤3 | 41,769 | 77.1% |
| | | ≤5 | 49,299 | 91.0% |
| Peason Ridge Training Area | 26,696 | ≤3 | 19,960 | 74.8% |
| | | ≤5 | 21,784 | 81.6% |
| ARMY TOTAL | 80,881 | ≤3 | 61,729 | 76.3% |
| | | ≤5 | 71,083 | 87.9% |
| GRAND TOTAL | 163,894 | ≤3 | 131,087 | 80.0% |
| | | ≤5 | 151,682 | 92.5% |

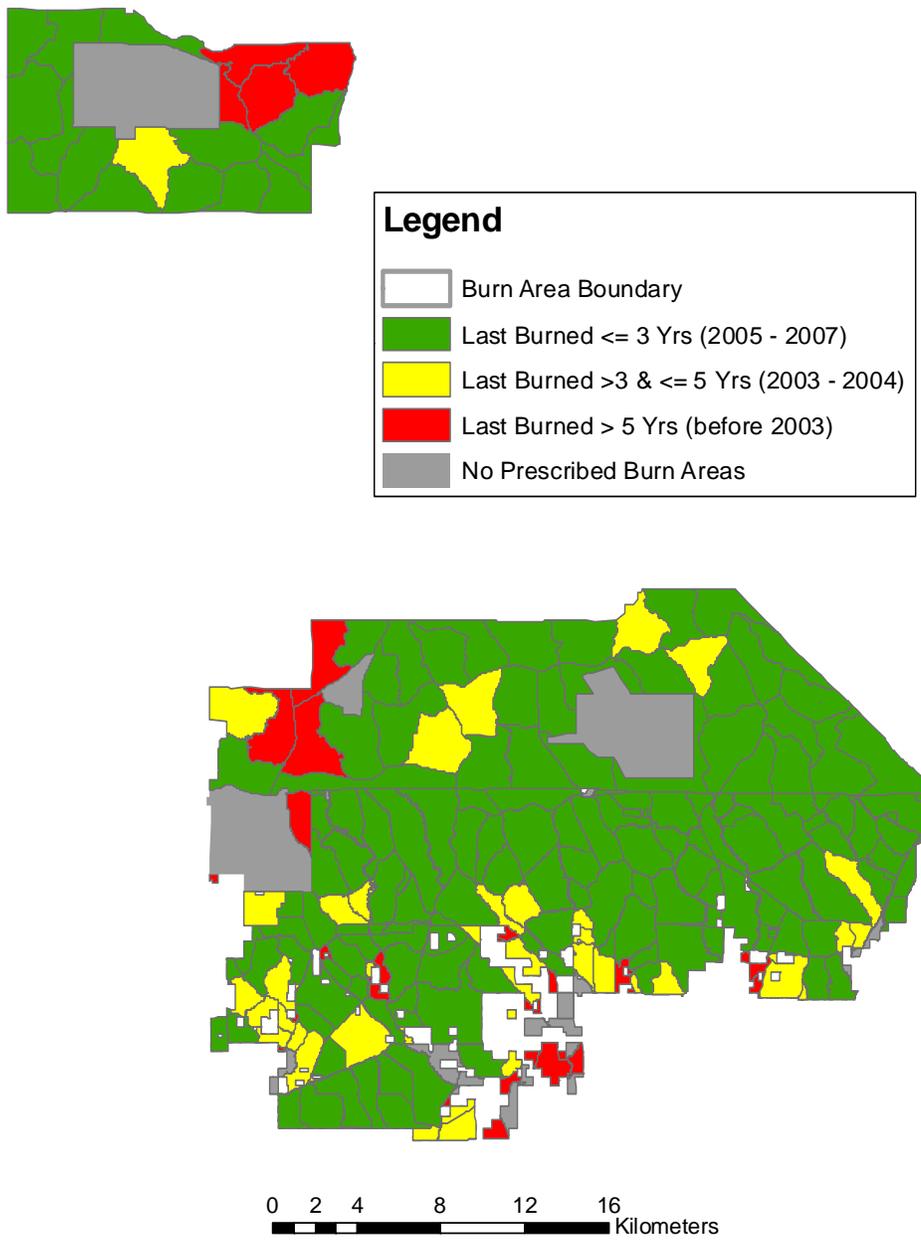


Figure 2-2.2. Years-since-last-burn by burn area for the Vernon Unit, Kisatchie National Forest and Army-owned Main Post and Peason Ridge.