

NC Prescribed Burning Cost Share Program Handbook

Jan. 1, 2023



http://www.ncforestservice.gov/Managing_your_forest/managing_your_forest.htm

<http://www.ncforestservice.gov/goodfire/index.htm>

Program Overview

During the 2021 N.C. General Assembly sessions, a program titled “Prescribed Burning Matching Program” was created under Section 10.9 of Senate Bill 105. In this section the N.C. General Assembly appropriated funds to the N.C. Forest Service (NCFS), within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for a prescribed burning matching cost share program.

Appropriated funds shall be used to support prescribed burns on privately owned forestlands, maximizing the benefits set forth in Article 80 of Chapter 106 of the statutes. The following document will serve as the guide for this program as directed by the N.C. General Assembly and administered by the N.C. Forest Service.

Time-limited funding is available for this program for approximately two years in the following annual amounts.

- \$1 million available for state fiscal year 2021-22
- \$1 million available for state fiscal year 2022-23

All burning projects will need to be completed by April 30, 2023, along with submission of all associated invoices for completed work to ensure program closeout deadlines can be met by June 30, 2023.

Eligibility

Eligible Property and Ownerships

Funding for prescribed burning is available for privately owned forestlands (all ownership types). A private individual, group, association or corporation owning land in North Carolina is eligible.

Where forestland is owned jointly by more than one individual, group, association or corporation, as tenants in common, tenants by the entirety or otherwise, the joint owners shall be considered as one eligible landowner and entitled to receive cost share.

Individual landowners who share in a joint ownership, but also possess distinct, separate property in their own name, are entitled to cost share as individuals, and the joint ownership does not affect the eligibility. The test on ownership rests with the way the deed is recorded. Government owned lands are not eligible for cost share (state or public land).

Eligible Prescribed Burning Practices

Applicants may apply for funding to conduct three types of prescribed burning practices. Eligible practices include the following types of prescribed burning:

- 1. Silvicultural Burning** – The use of prescribed fire to prepare areas for natural pine or oak regeneration, pre-commercial thinning to reduce competing tree density of undesirable species and the use of prescribed fire to manage for insects or disease concerns to promote forest health.
- 2. Hazard Reduction Burning** – The use of prescribed fire for the purpose of mitigating forest fuels to reduce the forestland risk from potential damage from wildfires.
- 3. Wildlife Habitat Burning** – The use of prescribed fire for the purpose of maintaining or creating improved forest, or open field conditions for desired plants, species and habitat.

To be eligible for funding, prescribed burning projects must meet the following criteria:

- (1) The project must comply with the requirements of Chapter 106, Article 80 of the General Statutes, as determined by the Forest Service (see appendices).
- (2) Funds provided by the program must be matched by funds from the landowner or other non-state sources.

Landowner Required Program Match

The **required match** shall be the following:

- (1) One non-state dollar (\$1) for every state dollar for each acre of the first 99 acres for a landowner for whom prescribed burns are conducted in a calendar year and**
- (2) Two non-state dollars (\$2) for every state dollar for all other acres owned by the landowner for which a prescribed burn is conducted in the same calendar year.**

Eligible landowners may receive funding to complete needed practice on a minimum of five acres with no maximum acre funding limit. To remain eligible for a reimbursement payment, all projects must measure five acres or greater.

There is a maximum payment of \$25,000 per landowner per calendar year.

Work will not be authorized for cost sharing until written notice has been received of allotment of funds to the project. Therefore, the landowner cannot receive payment for any work started before the written authorization from the N.C. Forest Service.

Program Requirements

Program requirements focus on compliance with the North Carolina Prescribed Burning Act (Chapter 106, Article 80), which was enacted by the N.C. General Assembly to promote prescribed burning as a beneficial management tool. Program requirements include the following:

1. Following funding and before conducting the prescribed burn, landowners must obtain a prescription for the burn prepared by a certified prescribed burner to be submitted and reviewed by the N.C. Forest Service. A copy of the prescription shall be provided to the landowner. A copy of this prescription must be in the possession of the responsible burner on-site throughout the duration of the prescribed burning.

The prescription must include the following:

- The landowner's name and address.
 - The objectives of the prescribed burning.
 - A description of the area to be burned.
 - A map of the area to be burned.
 - An estimate of total fuel located on the area to be burned.
 - A list of acceptable weather conditions and parameters for the prescribed burn that minimizes the likelihood of the fire escaping onto adjacent areas and smoke management concerns.
 - The name of the certified prescribed burner responsible for conducting the burn.
 - A summary of adequate methods surrounding the circumstances involved for starting, controlling and extinguishing the prescribed burning.
 - Reasonable notice provision of the prescribed burning to be provided to nearby homes and businesses to avoid impacts on health and property.
2. Obtain an open burning permit from N.C. Forest Service (when applicable)

Additionally, any prescribed burning must comply with the following:

- Terms and conditions of the open burning permit issued
 - North Carolina air pollution control statutes
 - Any applicable local ordinances
 - North Carolina smoke management guidelines
3. The prescribed burn shall be conducted by a certified prescribed burner who must be present on-site and in charge throughout the burning period. Exceptions to this would be if the landowner is burning 50 acres or less while following all conditions in the prescription as prepared by the certified prescribed burner.

Application Process for Program Funding

A complete application packet for funding consideration consists of the following:

(1) A practice plan including a map of the project area outlining the prescribed burning prescription practices and acres requested, along with the project objectives and any environmental considerations (smoke management, FPGs and BMPs recommended).

(2) Form 4910-3, NCFS Generic Cost Share Application.

- N.C. Forest Service Prescribed Burning Cost Share Program should be written in the Program Name block (NCFS Prescribed Burning Program).

NCFS Form 4910-3 must be completed and contain required signatures by the landowner applicant and a NCFS representative. Electronic versions with E-signatures may be accepted along with hand signed copies.

A notarized Power of Attorney form is required if a landowner chooses to work with an agent and gives authorization for said agent to make decisions, or to sign any forms on the landowner's behalf.

Funding Prevailing Rates at Time of Sign-up

Established funding rates have been determined by practice and by burning entities (those who conduct the burn) to allocate appropriate funding for burning projects. The N.C. Forest Service encourages the use of private contractors, conservation agencies, or landowners to conduct burning for this grant program.

Landowners may not receive state cost share funding on the same project acres where federal cost share funds apply, or where burning is a federal program requirement for maintenance. Funds or payments received for any federal cost share programs cannot be used as a match on the same acres.

These rates will be used to allocate appropriate funding utilized for the completion of burning projects. Project reimbursement funds will be based on actual costs, up to the funding prevailing rates, whichever is lower.

Prescribed Burning Grant Funding Prevailing Rates/Acre

Burning Practice Type	Funding Rate	Funding Rate
	NCFS Contracted	Private Contractor/Landowner
Silvicultural	35	50
Hazard Reduction	35	50
Wildlife Habitat	35	50

*These are the funding amounts to help cover a portion of project costs, and total funding allocated will be based on total acres requested, multiplied by prevailing rates and program reimbursement percentage (state dollar match based on acres requested within one calendar year).

Reimbursement amounts will be based on actual acres completed based and costs or prevailing rates, whatever is lower. Landowners are required to match a certain ratio of project costs depending on the number of acres burned.

Example #1 – Small Burn less than 100 acres

- *Landowner submits application for a 50-acre hazard reduction burn to be conducted by the NCFS. The landowner will be allocated \$875 in reserve funding to cover a portion of the costs to complete the burn.*
- *30 acres were successfully burned at a rate of \$35/acre for a total cost of \$1,050. For burns less than 100 acres, the landowner must match 1-1 of the total cost or \$525 and they would be eligible to receive \$525 in state program reimbursement (50% reimbursement).*

Example #2 – Larger Burn 150 acres

- *Landowner applies for a 150-acre wildlife habitat burn to be conducted by a private contractor. This is the first burn that a landowner has conducted this calendar year. The landowner is required to provide a 1-1 match on the first 99 acres and then a 2-1 match on the remaining 51 acres. The landowner will be allocated \$3,342 in reserve funding to cover a portion of the costs to complete the burn.*
- *All 150-acres were successfully burned by the contractor at a rate of \$50/acre for a total cost of \$7,500. The landowner must provide a match of \$2,475 on the first 99 acres and \$1,683 on the remaining 51 acres for a total landowner match of \$4,158. Following the required landowner match, the state program reimbursement share would total \$3,342.*

Application & Funding Approval Process

Application requests will be funded on a “first come, first serve” method in which they are received at the NCFS Headquarters in Raleigh, N.C.

Upon certification of the availability of allotted funding of the project, the NCFS district office and the applicant will be notified. If the requested funding allotment cannot be fulfilled due to insufficient funds, or until application modifications are approved, the NCFS district office will be notified of the application status. The NCFS district office is responsible for notifying the counties and landowners of project funding status and changes.

Work will not be authorized for cost sharing until written notice of allotted funding for the project has been received. Therefore, the landowner cannot receive payment for any work started before the written authorization.

An exception to the written notice could be made to facilitate burning if weather conditions are favorable. Verbal approval may be given only if a Prescribed Burning Program application is already on file in the NCFS Headquarters awaiting written notice. Approvals will be confirmed via email or fax to the NCFS Headquarters on the same working day. Projects completed without either a verbal or written approval will not be cost shared.

Modification of Projects

Changes in recommended acres may be requested by the NCFS district office personnel after an application has been submitted or approved. The revisions must be made and approved by the NCFS Headquarters before any request for payment. In such cases, an amendment to the practice plan or letter must be made and approval received from the NCFS Headquarters.

The NCFS district office and landowner will receive a revised allocation letter reflecting the change in practice(s), acres and/or funding. Work may start on the revised project, or payment may be requested as soon as this notification is received. The NCFS district office is responsible for notifying the counties and landowners on project funding status updates and changes.

Project Planning (Pre-burn or day of the burn)

The landowner, agent, or burning contractor must have obtained important burning documentation before conducting the burn. They include the following:

Prescribed Fire Plan (Burn Plan)

A copy of the prescribed fire plan (burn plan) must be submitted to the NCFS county ranger's office where the prescribed burn is scheduled to take place. Burn Plans will be reviewed, signed and dated by the NCFS to ensure they contain the required elements. **At a minimum, burn plans must be submitted for review no later than five working days before proposed burn date.**

The burn plan must meet all requirements outlined under Article 80 as established by the N.C. Forest Service to remain eligible for cost-share assistance. The Pre-Burn Planning with objective, smoke management, acceptable range of weather parameters, and any special situations must be completed before burning (Part 1 and Part 2 of attached Burn Plan Template).

On the day of the burn, the Preparation for Burning, Burn Execution Plan and Mop-up sections should be completed to provide documentation of planning and burning execution for the burning event. On-site weather readings should be taken to verify local conditions are within the recommended weather parameters and forecast desired for successful burning results.

Open Burning Permit (when applicable)

If a burning permit has not already been obtained for the specific tract, this must be obtained before the burn begins.

Notification Requirements

The following notifications must be made before burning can begin:

- Contact the NCFS district operations officer
 - Confirm location, start time of burn, weather meets parameters in the burn plan, and estimated acres to be burned.
- Provide reasonable notice of the prescribed burn to nearby homes and businesses to avoid negative effects on health and property.
- The burn boss contacts the non-emergency 911 call center to request that the county dispatcher notify area fire departments of burning.
- Once the burn is complete, the burn boss or certified burner should call the NCFS district operations officer to report number of acres burned and the estimated tons consumed.

Program Process for Payment Reimbursement (Post burn)

Payment Reimbursement Process

To begin the certification process for project completion, the landowner must notify the NCFS that the practices have been completed, including any best management practices recommended to ensure environmental protection. They must also submit all associated invoices of project costs to NCFS offices for review and approval.

After the landowner's matching funds are applied, final cost share reimbursement payments will be calculated using certified project acres completed. This will be multiplied by actual invoice costs, or up to the program's prevailing rate, whichever is less. Completed burning projects require practice certification by NCFS personnel through review, completion of performance section of the Prescribed Burn Plan, and official measurement of the burning project.

A completed project packet must be reviewed by a NCFS district representative for accuracy and completeness before submitting a request for reimbursement payment to the headquarters.

A completed burning project packet should include the following:

- A copy of final completed Burn Plan with post burn evaluation completed.
- A copy of open burning permit (when applicable), weather forecast for the day of the burn, and a prescribed burning job report if burn conducted by NCFS.
- A NCFS Measurement Documentation of work completed.
- Completed 4910-3 application with acres, costs and certification.
- All associated prescribed burning project invoice(s) and/or contracts.

Project certification includes the completion of all required performance inspections and the acreage measurement that corresponds to established standards (NCFS Policy & Procedure 4221 – Acreage Measurement).

The payment reimbursement packet that is sent to the NCFS Headquarters must include the following:

- Completed 4910-3 application with acres, costs and certification.
- All associated prescribed burning project invoice(s)
- State of North Carolina Substitute W-9 Form

Timeframes for Measurement and Payment Submission

To assist with timely reimbursement, all completed program burning projects should submit required documentation to the NCFS for review and approval **within one-month of project completion**. NCFS county rangers will assist with notifying landowners and/or their agents of timeframes for payment submission during late April-early May to ensure as many projects are paid out before the state fiscal year payment deadlines.

When requested by the landowner or contractor, the NCFS may complete a pre-measurement of anticipated treatment areas when program priorities permit. The landowner or contractor must clearly designate treatment area boundaries and give the NCFS an expected treatment date.

The NCFS will pre-measure the treatment area within 20 working days of the request, provided adequate resources are available. If measurement is to be delayed 25 working days or longer, the requestor should be notified along with the district forester.

Treated areas shall be measured within 10 working days after the NCFS is notified of practice completion. If the measurement timeframe will exceed 10 working days, the county ranger will notify the landowner, contractor and/or agent.

If measurement will be delayed 15 working days or longer, then the district forester must be notified. Once the measurements are completed, the landowner, contractor and agent (consultant forester) shall be notified.

Documentation and Record Keeping

Record Keeping

NCFS districts should develop and maintain a tracking system for all prescribed burning funded projects. Payment reimbursement records will be compiled at the NCFS Headquarters for those practices completed in each county. NCFS districts should record any program cost share accomplishments along with all other forest management activities through the regular reporting system.

List of Appendices

1. Prescribed Burning Act – Article 80
2. Prescribe Fire Plan (Burn Plan) Template
3. NCFS Generic Cost Share Application – Form 4910-3