

SUMMER IN THE FIELD

*It's "fire season," and LANDFIRE users are not just talking the talk but walking the walk -- putting scenario planning to work and refining data and products in dynamic ways. Our summer post cards will highlight some of those land managers, starting with **Fire Manager Margit Bucher**, a founder and current board member of the North Carolina Prescribed Fire Council, and co-lead for the Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network. She oversees the fire management program on 50,000 acres of Nature Conservancy lands in North Carolina.*



Assistant Director of Science & Stewardship at The Nature Conservancy, Margit Bucher oversees the fire management program on 50,000 acres of Conservancy lands in North Carolina. Her focus is on ecologically based fire management to restore and maintain resilient long leaf pine, pondpine (pocosin) and Appalachian pine and oak ecosystems.



North Carolina holds the longleaf pine near and dear, per the state's toast: *Here's to the land of the longleaf pine, the summer land where the sun doth shine, where the weak grow strong and the strong grow great, here's to 'Down Home,' the Old North State!* The highest civilian honor is the Order of the Longleaf Pine. Photo (c) 2004 Lisa Kelly

In The Field ...

... with Margit Bucher



Tell us about your interest in restoring fire in the Southeast

I have long been interested in disturbance ecology and understanding how ecosystems function and applying this to managing wildlands has led me to fire management and becoming a burn boss and fire manager. I'm able to pursue my interests within the framework of The [Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network](#) (SBR FLN). Our goal is to restore fire-adapted pine oak ecosystems in order to build resilient forests and woodlands in the mountains of North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia.



How do LANDFIRE products inform your work?

LANDFIRE vegetation models provide information about reference conditions, which helps SBR FLN partners (USFS, NPS, TNC, State Parks, Wildlife agencies, City of Greenville Water Shed, Mountain True, Land Trust for Little Tennessee) **set restoration goals.**

With assistance from TNC-LANDFIRE program staff Jim Smith and Randy Swaty, partners met in workshops in Asheville and Georgia to **review existing models and update them** with disturbance regimes from recent local fire history studies and local knowledge about other disturbances (wind, ice storms). The analyses showed that in absence of fire as frequent disturbance (roughly 3-25 years) our forests, many of which were also recovering from logging, loss of chestnut as major canopy tree, were too dense and especially lacked both late open and early successional habitat.

Also, LANDFIRE supported an **analysis** using LIDAR data to compare current conditions to reference conditions in the revised local models.* SBR FLN partners have been using the modified models to inform desired conditions and restoration targets.



What would you like to see LANDFIRE change or improve in the future that would help your program?

After the [Biophysical Settings model review](#), it would be helpful to see the models published, including their range of natural variability across the region. And, we look to more LANDFIRE staff support when we encourage partners and researchers connected to FLN through the [Joint Fire Science Program's Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers & Scientists](#) to engage in the ongoing modeling revisions to ensure a broader review and incorporation of the most up-to-date information in the next iteration of the models.

* [An Assessment of the Ecosystems of Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest & Surrounding Lands: A Synthesis of the eCAP Methodology and LiDAR Vegetation Analysis](#), and [Using LiDAR to Analyze Vegetation Structure & Ecological Departure in the Upper Warwoman Watershed](#).



Learn more

- **Read** this 2013 [Southern Fire Exchange Network](#) interview with Margit.
- **Watch** these [short video interviews](#) with Margit, conducted by N.C. State University last year.
- [Contact Margit directly.](#)
- Long leaf pine
and **fire:** <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/northcarolina/north-carolina-role-of-fire-in-longleaf-pine-forests.xml>