



RESTORATION IN PROGRESS...

REDUCING WILDFIRE RISK

RESTORING ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

The Department of Environmental Resources Management (ERM) will be conducting work at this Natural Area by using mechanical tools to reduce vegetation to reduce the risk of wildfire activity and improved health of the ecosystem. The health of the native plants and animals will be greatly improved by the reduction of biomass in this area.

What to Expect:

ERM will be employing a tracked mower-like machine and an experienced operator to reduce the height and mass of vegetation on the site. The machine will also reduce the dead vegetation on the ground. Initially residents can expect a drastic change to the vegetative landscape in this section of the natural area. Within the first few months the oaks and saw palmettos will begin to sprout new growth. ERM staff will be on site during the process and will oversee the work.

Reasons for Work:

There are many reasons to do work of this type. Fuel reduction is important to prevent wildfire severity. By reducing the fuel loads on the ground, in the event of a wildfire, the fire would be more controllable, would be less likely to quickly escape the natural area and would not burn for a long duration. Vegetation reduction is important to the health of the ecosystem and its inhabitants. Gopher tortoises thrive in open sandy environments. In the absence of naturally occurring fire in scrub habitat, vegetation becomes overgrown and chokes out gopher tortoise burrowing and foraging areas. In addition, many smaller herbaceous species such as milkweed, rosemary and lechea, all threatened Florida natives, need open and sandy ground to survive and are benefitted by restoration of this type.

Finally, by reducing vegetation and fuel loads in this area and allowing time for the chopped fuels to decompose, it should be possible to safely conduct a prescribed fire in this area. Prescribed fire is a very important component to the health of scrub habitat. It allows recycling of nutrients and regeneration of fire dependent species such as sand pines.

The expected amount of time during which the site will be closed will vary with conditions and size of the site. Residents can expect noise associated with large mechanical construction type vehicles during the daytime hours. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project please feel free to contact ERM at (561)233-2400. Thank you for your patience and understanding with this project.

