



FIRE BOSS RANDY THOMPSON watches as his backing fire builds momentum.

## Burn Study Continues In Swamp

BY SUSAN USHER

It was a fast, neat burn; the first of the four plots went up in smoke in less than 15 minutes, leaving a tidy rectangle smoldering in its wake.

Seconds later, Rick Schneider was down on one knee, checking the readout on a "minilogger," a portable computer device used to measure temperatures at various intervals during the fire. At one point—probably early in the burn he said, temperatures reached at least 1,100 degrees in the wiregrass. However, temperatures were lower overall than they would have been had the fuel been dry.

Thursday's "burn" was part of Schneider's continuing doctoral work in plant community ecology. He's studying the role of wildfire—or its absence—on the wire-grass/longleaf pine savannas of the Green Swamp.

Using a technique called prescribed burning, the Duke University student has been burning plots at various times of year and under varying controlled conditions to determine how often and when during the year the savannas should be burned for maximum benefit.

The Burn  
In 51-degree weather and with a slight breeze out of the northeast Fire Boss Randy Thompson and his assistant, Gary Sykes, started a "backing" fire, the easiest kind to contain. Thompson took a drip torch and set ablaze one side of the plot. Then he set fire to the other side.

Meanwhile, volunteers equipped with 40-pound water tanks and rubber flappers watched to make sure the fire stayed within its assigned boundaries. With handaxes pulled up on their faces, Carol May, Margit Bucher, Abi Rome and Bob Northcott smothered or hoed the few flames bold enough to creep into the mowed, raked border surrounding the plot.

With a low whistling sound the two fires quickly met and peaked, then died, leaving smoldering ash in their wake. However, the darkness of the fuel meant only the top layer of vegetation had burned thoroughly. Underneath, green peeked through. Some small shrubs looked as though the flames nuzzled them altogether, noted Ms. May, the North Carolina Nature Conservancy's director of stewardship. She's supervises caretaking of the Conservancy's preserves.

Thursday was the second time Schneider had attempted to measure temperatures; at an earlier burn he used a series of painted plates, all of which blistered and peeled.

This time wires of different metals—which heat up at different temperatures—were connected,

creating a "thermocouple" to generate a measurable electrical charge. Wires were set on the surface of the ground, one centimeter beneath it and several feet above it. Schneider anticipated a difference of between 600 and 700 degrees between temperatures taken at surface and above-surface levels.

"It should be obvious which ones are above and which aren't," he added.

Burning is known to help certain types of vegetation found in the Green Swamp Preserve; such as flowering wiregrass, as well as helping create an environment hospitable to certain carnivorous plants. It is also used as a management tool by the forestry industry to reduce the likelihood of rampaging wildfires.



RESEARCHER RICK SCHNEIDER (right) sets up a minilogger to record temperatures as volunteers (from the front clockwise) Abi Rome, Carol May, Bob

Northcott, Margit Bucher look on. Standing are fire crew members Randy Thompson and Gary Sykes of Federal Paperboard Co.

## November Health Grades Reported

Sanitarians in the Brunswick County Health Department inspected and graded the following establishments during November.

Food service establishments and lodging places grades are based on a perfect score of 100 percent, with points taken away for infractions of health standards. An "A" is given to scores of 90 or better, a "B" to scores between 80 and 90, and a "C" to scores between 70 and 80. An establishment which scores less than 70 would not be allowed to remain in operation.

Day and residential care facilities are approved or disapproved on the basis of demerits assigned for health infractions.

**Restaurants:** Calabash Seafood House, Calabash, 84; Carla's Country Kitchen, Seaside, 90.5; Ginny's Chicken House, Holden Beach, 92; Hardee's, Shallotte, 93; Hill's Deli Bakery, Shallotte, 90; Island House, Ocean Isle Beach, 90; The Islander, Ocean Isle Beach, 93; Kenny's Restaurant, Shallotte, 90; Margie's Homestyle Restaurant, Shallotte, 98; Hobert's Pizza, Seaside, 91; Sizzlin' Sirloin Steakhouse, Shallotte, 95; Thomas' Restaurant, Calabash,

93; Trawler's Oyster Barge, Calabash, 90; Bennett's Seafood Kitchen, Calabash, 92.5; Maco Truckstop, Maco, 91.5; Y's Cafe, Southport, 94; Service Corp. of America No. 2, CP&L site, Southport, 92.

**Food Stands:** JJ's Grill, Shallotte, 94.

**Meat Markets:** Food Lion, Shallotte, 93.5; Hill's No. 55, Leland, 90; Shallotte Red & White, Shallotte, 91; Wilson's No. 6, Southport, 92.5.

**Bed and Breakfast:** Dasher Plantation House, Southport, 97.

**School Lunchrooms:** North Brunswick High School, Leland, 93;

Southport Elementary School, Southport, 92.5.

**Lodging Places:** Ann's Motel, Bolivia, 90; Boiling Spring Lakes Motel, Boiling Spring Lakes, 95; Captain's Cove Motel, Long Beach, 92.5; Holiday Lodge Motel, Leland, 70.5; Pier House Motel, Long Beach, 95.5; Town and Country Motel, Leland, 86; Twilight Motel, Shallotte, 95.5; Island Inn, Long Beach, 96.

**Day Care Facilities:** Tiny Friends Day Care, Shallotte, approved.

**Residential Care Facilities:** Louis C. and Jaunita Aker, Route 1, Southport, approved.

## Month Warm, Wet, Cloudy

November was warm, wet and cloudy, according to the National Weather Service office in Wilmington.

Temperatures averaged 59.7 degrees, tying November 1975 as the sixth warmest November since the service began keeping local records in 1871.

Precipitation totaled nearly 4 1/2 inches,

with 1.25 inches recorded on Nov. 15 and measurable rainfall on 12 days.

On the 30th a wind gust to 41 mph was recorded, with average daily wind speeds of 8.3 mph.

November usually receives 68 percent of possible sunshine for the month; this November the percentage was 37.

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