

Forest Service plans prescribed burns

THE JOURNAL STAFF

The USDA Forest Service has begun annual, prescribed burns in the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests. Depending on weather, the burning may continue as late as June.

"We conduct prescribed burns under very specific and controlled conditions to imitate fire that naturally occurs in forested areas," said Francis Marion and Sumter Fire Management Officer

Brian Schaffler. "The burns improve forest health, enhance habitat for native species like wild turkey and songbirds and prevent the excess buildup of forest fuels that could result in catastrophic wildfire."

Ground personnel using drip torches and helicopters will be used. Burns are scheduled when weather conditions are most likely to reduce the risk of escaped fire and smoky conditions. However, motorists

or residents near the national forests may see smoke columns or encounter reduced visibility in low-lying areas as well as additional traffic along Forest Service roads.

For questions about a burn or smoke near the forests in Oconee and Pickens counties, please call the following office: Andrew Pickens Ranger District Office at (864) 638-9568, between 8 a.m. and noon or 12:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.