## Why Mitigate?

The Florida Forest Service conducts wildfire mitigation activities throughout the year to help protect communities in Collier, Hendry and Lee Counties from wildfires.

On average, wildfires burn 7,000 acres, or 11 sq. miles, of land each year in southwest Florida.

In addition to placing human lives and property at risk, wildfires can also alter hydrology and destroy or degrade wildlife habitat, including that of endangered species, such as the Florida panther.

*Wildfire mitigation projects reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires. The photo above shows homes where roller chopping occurred, not far from where the wildfire below occurred. Photo below courtesy of The News-Press.*

## Services Available

*The Florida Forest Service provides guidance and assistance with:*

- Wildfire Risk and Mitigation
- Prescribed Burning
- Land Management
- Timber Sales
- Planting and Reforestation
- Contractor Selection
- Wildlife Management
- Insect and Disease Identification
- Community Forest Designation
- Forest Stewardship Program
- American Tree Farm System
- Tree City USA
- Pruning

## Caloosahatchee Forestry Center

*Serving Collier, Hendry, and Lee Counties*

10941 Palm Beach Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33905
(239) 690-3500
(239) 690-3504, FAX

Follow us on Twitter @FFS_cafc

# WILDFIRE MITIGATION

## *IN SOUTH FLORIDA*

## Understanding the Work to Reduce Your Risk

*ADAM H. PUTNAM*
*COMMISSIONER*
*FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES*

# What is Mitigation?

Wildfire mitigation is the proactive implementation of various measures designed to minimize the destructive effects of wildfires.

The most effective mitigation activities:

- reduce the amount or height of vegetative fuels
- include prescribed fire and mechanical treatments, such as mulching, grinding and roller-chopping

The Florida Forest Service conducts wildfire mitigation activities throughout the year to help protect communities in Collier, Hendry and Lee Counties from wildfires.

Mitigation activities are conducted in high-risk wildland-urban interface (WUI) communities. The WUI refers to those areas where homes are interspersed with natural lands. The wildfire risk of an area is determined by a number of factors, including the amount and types of vegetation present and how it is arranged in the landscape.

*Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) communities, like the one pictured here, are composed of homes interspersed with wildlands. WUI communities in Florida are typically at high risk of wildfires.*

# Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire refers to the planned and controlled application of fire to a specific piece of land to accomplish resource management objectives, such as wildfire mitigation.

For wildfire mitigation objectives, prescribed fires are designed to reduce dense vegetation and thereby minimize the risk of life-threatening wildfires.

The Florida Forest Service conducts prescribed fires only when practical and safe. A written prescription is prepared for every burn that specifies how and when it can be implemented to ensure safety and effectiveness.

In most cases, prescribed burning is more efficient and cost-effective than other types of treatments, but it can be difficult to implement in densely-populated areas due to smoke and other concerns. In areas where prescribed fire is impractical, mechanical treatments are often used to reduce hazardous fuel loads.

*Wildland firefighters receive extensive, ongoing education and training that enable them to plan and conduct successful prescribed burns safely. Firefighters utilize a variety of techniques when conducting prescribed burns to achieve the desired objectives..*

# Mechanical Treatments

## *Roller Chopping*

Roller chopping is a mechanical treatment achieved through the use of a bulldozer that pulls a metal drum with protruding metal blades. The drum knocks down and cuts up flammable understory plants, such as saw palmetto. Operators avoid or limit roller chopping beneath tree canopies to reduce the potential for stress to the trees.

## *Grinding and Mulching*

Grinding and mulching are mechanical treatments that employ heavy machinery with toothed, rotating drums that grind vegetation into a layer of mulch that quickly decomposes. Grinding and mulching are more costly than roller chopping, but allow wildland firefighters to work closer to homes.