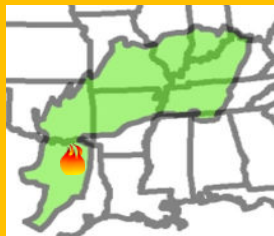


Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area

FIRE SCIENCE HOT SPOTS



In this feature, we bring into focus fire science on-the-ground

The Gus Engeling Wildlife Management Area (GEWMA), located in northwest Anderson County, Texas, is a unique area of post oak (*Quercus stellata*) savanna surrounded by a landscape dominated by non-native grasses, industrial agricultural operations, and fragmented wildlife habitat. In addition to post oak savanna, the 11,000+ acre WMA also includes hardwood bottomlands, marshes, swamps, and almost 300 acres of sphagnum moss bogs (bottom-left image below). The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department acquired much of the WMA in the 1950s. The primary management objectives are to develop and maintain habitats and populations of native wildlife species, provide opportunities for wildlife research, and demonstrate habitat management practices to landowners and other interested groups (see bottom-right inset photo of 2016 fire management field tour at a restored grassland). Shortly after acquisition, approximately 200 acres were restored to resemble historical oak savanna habitat. These areas continue to be maintained with prescribed fire and other forms of mechanical treatments (top-right panel below).

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Much of GEWMA has prescribed fire applied on a 3-yr rotation (e.g., dormant season fire, March 2017, inset top-left panel). In addition, different forest thinning treatments or clearing for grasslands have occurred across the WMA since 2010 (bottom-right panel). Without recurring fire, much of the area would be dominated by closed-canopy forests with a dense shrub layer (top-left panel above, an unrestored site with dense Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)), which is undesirable wildlife habitat and also affects

the area's hydrology. GEWMA has exceptional diversity, in terms of habitat types, wildlife species, and plant species (over 1,000 plant species recorded), including rare fire-adapted species like the pale pitcher plant (*Sarracenia alata*) in sphagnum moss bogs (bottom-left panel). Click on each photo for a full-size downloadable image, or view all [HERE](#). Photo credits: inset top-left, Kyle Hand; pale pitcher plant and bottom-right main panel, Earl Nottingham; others by Oak Woodlands & Forests Fire Consortium.

