

FIRE IN FLORIDA'S ECOSYSTEMS: An Effort to Increase Acceptance of Prescribed Fire

One way to reach the public is through curricula that educate school children about fire which in turn can educate households and bring about increased acceptance of fire throughout a community. The Fire in Florida's Ecosystems (FIFE) program is a curriculum and corresponding teacher training targeted to grades 3-12. The Florida Division of Forestry founded and supports the program. The FL DOF has contracted with Pandion to develop and deliver FIFE to over 1700 teachers since 1998. The program is delivered via free day long hands on teacher training workshops where educators learn about fire ecology while also participating in several of the curriculum's activities. Teachers then take the information and materials back to their classroom for use in schools, nature centers, parks, and other educational settings.

FIFE is one of the most comprehensive and successful K-12 fire ecology programs in the country. FIFE integrates core information on fire's natural role in nature, wildfire prevention, and prescribed burning. While it is a Florida-based program, the curriculum could easily be adapted to other states. The FIFE training and outreach model has proven to be hugely successful with over 90% of participants using some portion of the curriculum package in their classrooms. In addition, evaluations of teachers from the training workshops have shown statistically significant increases in knowledge about and attitudes toward fire. Follow up research of FIFE has shown that teachers retain this change in knowledge and attitudes months and even years after they participated in the training.

For more information on FIFE, please go to the website - <http://www.pandionsystems.com/Services/TrainingPrograms/FireinFloridasEcosystems/tabid/102/Default.aspx>