

Buck Shank Fire BAER Project 2007

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During the month of September of 2007, two personnel scoured the area inside and around the perimeter of the Buck Shank Fire, which occurred in late May - early June of 2007 in the western section of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In the past, exotics such as Paulownia, Ailanthus and Mimosa have been found in this area, primarily in locations that have been burned either after management-ignited fire or in wildfires. The goal was to find any seedlings inside the perimeter of the fire and to remove potential seed trees outside the perimeter so that they will not be able to seed into the area.

The project began on September 4, 2007. Primarily the ridge tops were scouted, as these are the areas that typically burn with the greatest intensity and/or severity, thus allowing exotic seedlings to become established. Open areas, such as stands of pine killed by the Southern Pine Beetle or areas that saw top-kill due to headfire, were also checked even if they were not on a ridge top.

Areas where Paulownia and Ailanthus were found were primarily where there is an open canopy. See attached map of major openings caused by pine beetle kill and/or top-killed areas due to fire. The areas mapped cover off-trail areas only, not areas of open canopy along major trails. The areas of most concern are the large area of regrowth in a former beetle kill area west of Kreider Branch centered about 0.45 mi. north of Abrams Creek and in the Hatcher Rx unit; the large area of beetle kill nearly equidistant between Buck Shank and Mill Branch starting just above Little Bottoms Trail; the patch approximately 0.4 mi. northeast of the previous location; and the patch near the bottom of the slope at the confluence of Buck Shank and its larger, western-flowing tributary.

See attached map for locations of Paulownia, Ailanthus, and Mimosa trees found within the Buck Shank and immediate perimeter. Any outer perimeter areas checked have been burnt in the past as either the Hatcher or Wedge Ridge Prescribed Fire Units.