

# GYRO-TRAC NEWS



## ***Mechanical fuel management at the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge, South Carolina***



At the [ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge](#) in South Carolina, the use of a Gyro-trac GT-18 was demonstrated by Refuge personnel on May 9th, 2006. In a bottomland area near some impoundments, a thick section of hardwoods was treated in preparation of a prescribed fire expected several months later. The machine is well-suited to soft soils due to its tracks and can handle small to medium-sized stems.

The Gyro-trac is rotated between different Refuges as part of the Fish and Wildlife Service's hazardous fuel program and is used primarily to maintain property lines and fire breaks, especially in Wildland-Urban Interface areas where homes are close to forests. [The Gyro-trac company](#) (link provided as a service and not as an endorsement)



After the Gyro-trac has finished, the fuels will be given a few months to dry out before the area is prescribed burned. Since the hardwoods are not killed and are vigorous resprouters, the Refuge staff have only a few months before regrowth makes a prescribed fire problematic due to green fuels.

With normal wear, a set of teeth were estimated to last 200-300 hours, with a replacement cost of several thousand dollars. Regular maintenance can also become a major investment as is the cost of moving the equipment to different sites. Since the mulching head spins downward, metal trash can damage teeth while wires can wrap around the head. Thus, a Refuge staff member must walk ahead of the mulcher if treating an area where visibility is limited and trash may be present.

Keith Penrose and Larry Hardtis of the FWS were very generous with their time by answering questions and demonstrating the Gyro-trac and their help is greatly appreciated.