

“Winter black-lining”

Reinforcing prescribed burn control lines with a multi-season approach

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“Winter black-lining” is a new term that describes a multi-season approach to establishing robust boundary for a prescribed burn unit. This is achieved by the creation of control lines in the dry season prior to the planned prescribed fire followed by the burning off of the dried material in the wet season. The result is a control line that is reinforced by an adjacent area of blackened vegetation.

Dry season of year one (May – Nov):

Objective: Cut in control lines for desired burn unit.

Establish control lines around the perimeter of the burn unit via bulldozer, hand-line cutting, brush cutting, small tree cutting and limbing up. Leave cut and scraped material next to your control lines. This vegetation material does not have to be piled and can lay where it falls.



{Cutting of small trees, brush and limbs next to ranch road on ridgeline}

Wet season year one (Dec – April):

Objective: Burn off cut material and flammable brush from next control lines and create a “blackline” adjacent to your control lines.

During windows of dry weather throughout the following wet season (Dec - Mar), after some “green-up” of grasses and forbs, a small group can “fire-off” the control lines, burning the now dry material that was generated the previous season, in addition to any leaf litter, ground fuels and flammable brush (such as chaparral) along the line. This can be done adjacent to any desired control line *within* the unit, whether it be a ridge, side hill or the toe of a slope.

One can also burn of dead vegetation and flammable brush *outside* the unit control lines if there is no chance of the burn getting away. Burning outside of the control lines is done only on ridgelines and on low wind days. When burning on ridgelines and in low winds, the fire has less ability to become a “head fire” and tends to stay next to the control lines. This should only be done in safe, low intensity burn conditions, not near a neighbor’s property and by those with sufficient experience.



{Winter burning of dried, cut material and green chaparral next to road on ridge}



{Winter burning of uncut, highly flammable, green chaparral next to road on ridge. Dried, cut material, next to the control line, burning in distance}



{Winter burning of cut material, green Doug firs and chaparral next to road on ridge}



{Winter burning of leaf litter and branches under woodlands to create a winter black line next to the control line – in this case, the road on a ridgeline}

Dry season year two (May-Nov):

Objective: *Conduct prescribed burn within winter black-line.*

The following dry season (May-Nov) you will have a robust, well established winter black-line of burned brush, leaf litter, small trees, and limbs. These winter black-lines act as reinforcement for the control lines and provide stronger containment for your dry season (May-Nov) prescribed burns.



{Winter black line of burned off thatch and brush next to control lines}



{Dry season broadcast burning within winter black lines}

{All photos: Jared Childress}

(The author assumes no liability for other's actions. This is not a how-to. For educational purposes only).