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Arsenal to conduct controlled burns

Special to The Commercial

The Pine Bluff Arsenal will hold controlled burns Thursday through Saturday. Residents should not be alarmed if they see large plumes of smoke coming from the arsenal.

An environmental burn to reduce foliage will be conducted Thursday and Friday by the Nature Conservancy's Arkansas field office and a controlled burn will be held by the Arsenal's Fire and Emergency Services Saturday.

According to Arsenal Fire Chief Tom Braumull-

er, the final burn should conclude by 5 p.m. Saturday, however, smoke may still be visible through Sunday.

"Weather conditions are also taken into consideration when conducting these burns to prevent smoking in sensitive areas," said Charles Becker, natural resources specialist for the arsenal.

Fires were historically a natural part of maintaining gulf coastal plain ecosystems and they kept the woodland open and the prairies free of brush. Native Americans

burned to stimulate berry and acorn production, improve forage for game species, and clear areas for travel.

Prescribed burning is also used to reduce heavy build-up of dead wood and other debris, reducing the possibility of severe wildfires during droughts.

"Safety is emphasized in all phases of fire management," Becker added.

"Conservancy fire staff will be working closely with base fire protection officials during the planning process and the burn itself."