Preface

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Fire has a long history of regional use in the United States for forest, range and game management. Except for a few high-profile threatened, endangered, and sensitive species such as the pine barrens treefrog (*Hyla andersonii*), the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), and the Kirtland's warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*), the use of prescribed burning for nongame management efforts has been rare. Moreover, in areas such as the central hardwood regions, the Appalachians and the Pacific Northwest, silvicultural uses of fire have been discouraged, which consequently have limited applications of fire for nongame management. However, new emphases on biodiversity and community restoration are leading to re-examination of fire as a management tool in regions with fire-dependent systems, such as the southeastern Coastal Plain and in areas where fire historically has been excluded.

The timeliness and need of this symposium at the seventh annual meeting of The Wildlife Society was very apparent. As forest and land management on public lands continues to move from utilitarian or multiple-use approaches to more ecologically holistic management programs, prescribed burning is becoming an increasingly acceptable land management tool even where rarely used before. Conversely, on private lands, smoke management and liability issues and increased ownership fragmentation are having the opposite effect—decreasing the use of prescribed fire in land management activities. As natural resource scientists and land managers, not only must we gain a better understanding of the effects of natural and prescribed fire (or lack thereof) on nongame species, but also we need to promote its use when clearly indicated as a prescription for natural resource management. A critical component of this promotion is the education of the public by forestry and wildlife professionals about the historical role of fire and the importance of prescribed burning as a land management tool.

This symposium attempted to synthesize the widely scattered information and disparate databases that exist regarding the role of fire for managing nongame wildlife and relictual communities. Accordingly, this symposium drew upon the expertise of regional and nationally recognized wildlife scientists, resource managers, and fire ecologists with papers presented on the historical background, current issues, ongoing management efforts, and research and management needs of prescribed burning for both eastern and western landscapes.