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News Release



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Arthur R. Marshall

Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Prescribed Fire Activity

Fire Management officials at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) are planning to conduct a prescribed burn for wildlife habitat management. Depending on cooperative weather conditions, approximately 25,000 acres will be burned on the refuge between November 2008 and April of 2009. Under prescribed conditions, highly trained professionals will plan, set, and extinguish the fire.

The crews plan to ignite these prescribed fires on several units which are composed of a mix of Sawgrass and Cattail, they are being burned primarily to reduce hazardous fuels and restore fire to the Everglades which is a fire dependant ecosystem. The burns will be conducted by 10-12 people working from airboats around the unit's perimeters, while a helicopter ignites the burns from the air. Prior to the burns Refuge fire and biology staff will fly over the unit to insure that no endangered species are present in the burn areas.

The burns will be conducted on days when winds are blowing from the east; this will move the smoke away from developed areas and out over the Refuge and agricultural areas where it will quickly disperse.

Prescribed fire is the burning of vegetation based on a prescription that takes into consideration fuel type, fuel moisture, relative humidity, air temperature, wind speed, wind direction, and other atmospheric conditions to ensure a safe and successful burn. According to Jon Wallace, prescribed fire specialist, "All prescribed fires must have approved plans and meet set criteria authorized by agency fire experts." The prescribed burn will also comply with all State of Florida open burning regulations. Refuge fire management staff will conduct the burns with assistance from fire staff at other refuges located throughout south Florida and in cooperation with Florida Division of Forestry and Palm Beach County Fire and Rescue.

A.R.M. Loxahatchee NWR
Prescribed Burning Winter-Spring 2009



Wallace, Loxahatchee Fire Management, 10/30/2008

The objectives of the A.R.M. Loxahatchee Fire Management Program are 1) to provide protection to private property and human lives against uncontrolled wildfires that may result from un-managed vegetative communities, 2) to provide protection to both natural and constructed Refuge resources from catastrophic wildfires through fuel reduction, 3) to maintain biological diversity in fire-maintained plant communities by prescribed fire and 4) to maintain habitat for Service trust resources, including endangered and threatened plant and animal species through prescribed fire.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fish and wildlife management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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