

For Immediate Release:

From: US Fish and Wildlife Service

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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to Protect the Wildland Urban Interface at Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) prepared a Wildland Fuel Hazard Assessment for Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in Mashpee and Falmouth, Massachusetts. The intent of the plan was to assess wildland fuel hazards and recommend a suite of hazard fuel mitigation treatments for the Refuge. It specifically focused on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The WUI is the meeting point of naturally occurring vegetated areas and structures. The Refuge is entirely within the WUI.

Existing roads on the Refuge serve as access/egress routes for firefighters as well as fire breaks for low intensity fires. In most cases, fuel loads along these roads has built up to the point that firefighter access is compromised by encroaching vegetation and dumping. The existing condition of these major roadways will significantly compromise firefighter safety by increased fire intensity along access roads, and the lack of any buffer between firefighters and the fire. In order to provide firefighters safe ingress and egress, we will be mechanically clearing an 8 foot buffer along roadsides on Service and partner lands. All litter and vegetation will be removed up to an 8 inch DBH. Soil disturbance will be limited to incidental scarification only.

The work will be completed using a low ground pressure tracked brush cutter called a Geo Boy. The Geo Boy is equipped with an 8 foot Fecon Drum cutter which is capable of mulching all of the fuels encountered during this project.

The work will be done along the Great Hay Road including areas where other roads junction or intersect Great Hay Road. The project is scheduled to begin the week of May 18<sup>th</sup> and will take approximately one month to complete.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).*

