

**National Key Deer Refuge
Prescribed Fire Program Frequently Asked Questions**

Question	Answer
Why are prescribed burns done?	The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service uses prescribed fire to maintain and restore vegetation in natural areas while reducing the risk of damaging wildfire to land and property. Without the unique ecological benefits of fire, the health of the Pine Rocklands – and the unique plants and wildlife that depends on them – would suffer, and the threat of catastrophic wildfire would increase dramatically.
By whom?	Trained wildland fire personnel from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We also receive assistance from the National Park Service, The Florida Forest Service, Big Pine Volunteer Fire Department, Monroe County Fire Rescue, Monroe County Sherriff’s office, Florida’s State Parks, The Nature Conservancy, and other cooperators when they are available.
Who is in charge?	The Refuge Manager for National Key Deer Refuge
How do I reach them with questions and concerns?	Nancy_finley@fws.gov or (305) 872-2239, x209
What is their experience and expertise in controlled burns?	Personnel in command on prescribed burns at the National Key Deer Refuge have extensive wildland fire and prescribed fire experience to reach the qualifications required to implement a burn in our complex environment. They typically have more than 15 years of experience. The Refuge also focuses on bringing in firefighters who have experience burning in Florida and the Keys.
How often are they done?	Our weather and staffing requirements are very strict. Our burn windows are typically from June-September and each burn is typically only a few days in duration.
How are areas to be burned chosen?	Treatment areas are chosen for ecological, technical, and safety reasons. They are first prioritized by staff biologists based on ecological criteria such as tree density and understory composition using on local research and monitoring as the guide. These prioritized units are then assessed by fire managers to determine the number of resources needed and weather parameters required to safely implement these burns.
Who decides when a burn is done? What factors into the decision?	The Refuge Manager decides when a burn is to be done. Periods of high visitation, such as lobster mini-season, are

	<p>avoided when possible. The needs of sensitive plants and wildlife are considered to avoid impacting these species. Finally, weather conditions, including rainfall, wind speed, and wind direction as well as availability of fire personnel must all meet planned parameters for any day to be considered for burning.</p>
<p>How much notice is given in advance of a scheduled burn?</p>	<p>The Refuge begins notifying the public at the start of our summer prescribed burn window, usually in June. Notification of the specific date of a burn can be difficult but we will try to provide at least 36 hour's notice in advance of a burn.</p>
<p>Why is more notice not given?</p>	<p>The strict weather parameters needed to meet a burn window are not easy to predict with certainty very far in advance.</p>
<p>How is notice given?</p>	<p>Through a variety of outlets including press releases, email lists, twitter, facebook, bigpinekey.com, US1 radio, fliers, mailings, and an electronic sign on Key Deer Blvd.</p>
<p>I have medication at home. Can I go into my home during a scheduled burn?</p>	<p>Absolutely. There are no plans to restrict access to homes during these burns.</p>
<p>Do you coordinate with County agencies? How?</p>	<p>Yes. We work with county agencies at all stages of the planning process, including through pre-burn cross training and meetings. County agencies are invited to participate during the burn.</p>
<p>What role does the fire Department and the Sheriff's Office play?</p>	<p>The Fire Department and Sheriff's office provide support to the burn when they are available. For example, they may assist in filling portable water tanks, with security, and by providing EMTs when needed.</p>
<p>What do you do to prevent the fire from getting out of control?</p>	<p>Each prescribed burn represents many hours of planning and preparation to weigh and prepare for the risks associated with all fire. The "prescription" for these burns takes into consideration fuel type, fuel moisture, relative humidity, air temperature, wind speed, wind direction, and other atmospheric conditions. With these parameters, we can model potential fire behavior and plan for the resources necessary to manage it. It also enables us to exclude certain weather scenarios because they would be too risky. The prescription also takes into consideration the local communities, access and egress, water sources, and potential smoke impacts to residences. Specialized equipment, such as tracked vehicles and helicopters, are brought in. All of these factors enable managers to have the resources in place to reduce the chances of a fire getting out</p>

	of control.
Who decides whether an evacuation is needed?	Evacuations are determined by county emergency management resources.
I use Twitter – can I be kept informed through Twitter?	Yes! At #KeysRxFire
How do you notify the public in the event that the fire gets out of control?	Through every means possible, including electronic signs, US 1 Radio, social media, phone lists, email lists, and by going door-to-door.
Are there public meetings planned for discussing the controlled burns with the community? If so, when, and where?	Public meetings for the upcoming prescribed fires are held annually prior to burning. They are announced via press release, social media, and US1 radio.
In the event that the fire damages private property, does the USFWS provide insurance for the losses?	<p>The Federal Tort Claims Act provides for the filing of claims against the United States for personal property damage or loss, personal injury, or wrongful death caused by the negligent or wrongful acts or omissions of federal government employees while acting within the scope of their employment, under circumstances where the United States, if a private person, would be liable to the claimant in accordance with the law of the State where the act or omission occurred.</p> <p>A tort claim must be filed within two years of the date of the incident which gave rise to the claim. A link to the form and instructions for filing the claim can be found online at:</p> <p>http://www.justice.gov/civil/docs_forms/SF-95.pdf</p>
Who is responsible for evacuating residents?	If an evacuation is necessary residents will be notified by law enforcement. State and Local law enforcement are the responsible agencies for local evacuations and can answer questions related to evacuations.
What if I have a condition that requires functional needs support services?	Please register with the county's Special Needs Registry to ensure you receive the proper assistance during an emergency. Their online registration is found at: http://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/index.aspx?nid=148
If there is an emergency such as a wildfire, how do I receive information about what I should do?	In the event of an emergency we would access the county's emergency management procedures. Specific details of how this system works can be found on (provide county web site or other info).
I have a disability and I may have difficulty receiving emergency information or updates on refuge information, what can I do?	You can contact us directly and we will ensure your needs are addressed within the county's response as well provide updates to you on refuge information in whatever format

	you suggest would work for you. Please just contact the refuge manager with your needs and we will do our best to work with with you.
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