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News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Key Deer Refuge Upcoming Prescribed Fires

The National Key Deer Refuge is making preparations for prescribed burns on Big Pine Key. Depending on upcoming weather patterns, the Refuge may conduct prescribed burning during the next two weeks. Refuge staff is monitoring weather conditions for days with a high probability of rainfall accumulations of 0.5" or more, or several days with measurable precipitation in a row. The planned burns are a 10- acre unit east of Key Deer Boulevard between Big Pine Avenue and Mahogany Lane and a portion of a 90-acre unit along the coast and west of Pine Heights subdivision. Maps of these units are also available at the Refuge visitor center.

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. Each prescribed burn represents many hours of planning and preparation. Prescribed burns are designed to both create defensible space in the event of unwanted wildfires as well as for wildlife habitat management. Prescribed fires are an integral part of management of Pine Rockland habitat on the National Key Deer Refuge.

The weather patterns in 2012 have resulted in higher-than-average amounts of rainfall to date. This rainfall is beneficial for meeting desired outcomes using prescribed fire in the Pine Rocklands, and recent precipitation is a component of prescribed fire plans. Refuge staff is working with firefighters from other National Wildlife Refuges in Florida as well as Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park and state and county fire staffs to implement the planned prescribed burns when required weather conditions are met.

The objectives of the National Key Deer Refuge's Fire Management Program are 1) to provide protection to private property and human lives against uncontrolled wildfires that may result from un-managed fire-maintained plant communities through vegetative fuel reduction, 2) to provide protection to both natural and constructed resources on the Refuge 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 endangered and threatened plant and animal species.

For more information on the fire program at National Key Deer Refuge, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer/firemanagement.html>