



# NEWS RELEASE



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## UMATILLA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FIRE RESTORATION TEMPORARY CLOSURES

Aerial weed spraying will take place on the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) on a portion of the McCormack Unit near Irrigon, Oregon, on December 4-6, 2008.

On July 2, 2008, a lightning caused wildfire occurred burned 500 acres on the refuge before it was contained. Much of the habitat burned was shrub-steppe, which is rapidly disappearing in the Columbia Basin.

Immediately after the fires, a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER, pronounced "bear") Plan was developed to address short- and long-term rehabilitation needs. The plan developed by refuge biologists included aerial spraying for weed control, seeding native species, and hand-planting native shrubs.

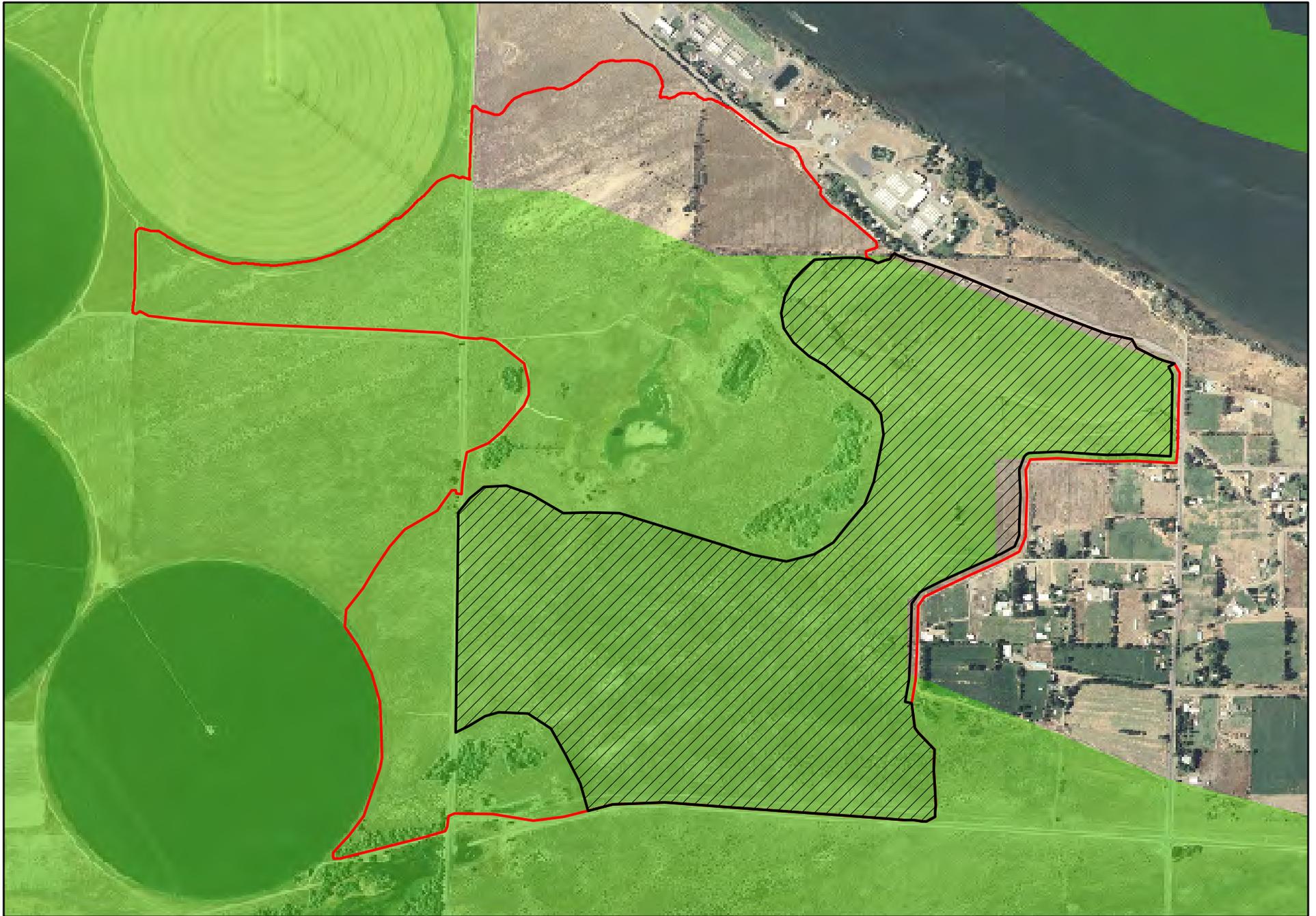
The aerial spraying for weed control will be conducted on approximately 250 acres located east of Paterson Ferry Road, north of Columbia Lane, and south of Riverview Lane. The spraying is being done to control annual invasive grasses, such as cheatgrass, prior to planting native grasses on the burned area. Aerial spraying operations will strictly adhere to established buffer zones around water resources and private lands where chemicals will not be used. Chemical applications will only be made during periods with light wind, moderate temperatures, and when no inversion layers are present. The actual spraying should only take one day if weather conditions are right.

The area to be sprayed is not open to public access. Further information can be obtained by calling the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex headquarters at (509) 546-8300.

While the ecological structure and function of the burned areas cannot be restored in a short period of time, these efforts jumpstart the recovery of ecological processes and habitat quality. Shrub-steppe is one of the slowest habitats to recover naturally and, without intervention, could take decades or longer to fully recover. Quickly halting the establishment and spread of invasive plants, and promoting native species establishment, will not only benefit native plants and animals, but will help prevent the area from being further damaged by future fires.

**– FWS –**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The FWS manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 national wildlife refuges—including two national monuments—thousands of wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 66 fishery resources offices, and more than 80 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 Aid Program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.



**Kathy's Pond Fire on Umatilla NWR**

- started 3 July 2008  
 - total area burned = 559 acres (499 acres on refuge)  
 - total length of disclines = 6.26 miles  
 File name: KPFire\_spray\_area.pdf

-  burned area perimeter
-  spray area (~257 acres)
-  Umatilla NWR\*

\*Eastern portion of refuge boundary is apparently depicted incorrectly on map.

