

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Florida Keys National
Wildlife Refuge Complex
28950 Watson Blvd.
Big Pine Key, FL 33043



Info Bulletin

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Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex Plans to Conduct Prescribed Burn(s) on Big Pine Key during Fall 2023.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to conduct prescribed burns in one or more locations within the National Key Deer Refuge on Big Pine Key during the months of October and November 2023, starting the week of October 8th. When suitable weather conditions are presented, a highly qualified staff of interagency professional fire specialists will implement these prescribed burns. The primary reasons for conducting these burns are to remove the over accumulation of vegetation acting as fire fuel along our wildland-urban interface to protect our community private property and residents, and for ecological purposes aimed at mimicking a natural fire in the pine rockland habitat. This activity creates a defensible space between refuge lands and private property that helps to prevent or reduce the threat of wildfires and reduce fuel loads. Restoration and maintenance of the fire-dependent pine rockland habitat is essential for a healthy ecosystem. Prescribed burns are important for the continued survival of local species such as the federally endangered Key deer, the Bartram's hairstreak butterfly and the butterfly's host plant, pineland croton, which has evolved to be dependent upon fire. Mechanized methods have also been used to strengthen fire breaks, as well as to mimic fire and restore pineland croton habitat in areas that are too overgrown or too close to private property to safely conduct prescribed fire activities.

Community updates will be announced on our website and Facebook page and via roadside advisory signs. Maps of proposed prescribed burn units will be posted soon on Florida Keys Refuges Facebook (Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex) and website <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/national-key-deer>

The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. Refuges also improve human health, provide outdoor recreation, and support local economies. *Visit our home page at* <https://www.fws.gov/program/national-wildlife-refuge-system>

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 <http://www.fws.gov/>.