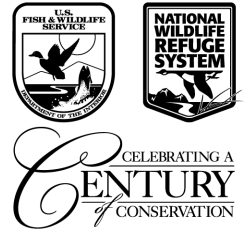


Public Information Bulletin

National Wildlife Refuge System



Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Refuge Begins Controlled Burning Operations

Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge will begin annual controlled burning operations in February. Controlled burning, also called prescribed burning, is the intentional application of fire to meet land management objectives and is essential to maintain the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem that dominates the refuge. Prescribed burns reduce hazardous fuels that build up in the absence of natural fires. These prescribed burns help prevent loss of property or life from a wildfire, and are also an effective habitat management tool to eliminate woody fuel build-up. All refuge prescribed burning operations are conducted under an approved plan that adheres to stringent guidelines for adequate firefighting resources and appropriate weather conditions.

The Refuge plans to conduct burns between February and June. All burn plans meet national standards and are developed by qualified and experienced fire management professionals. These plans are extensively reviewed and must receive final approval from the Refuge Manager prior to ignition. Firefighters from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other cooperators will conduct the burns.

Refuge fire management personnel closely monitor weather and fuel conditions to maximize results and minimize smoke impacts on adjacent communities. Burns will only be conducted during the daytime hours. Highways 1 and 145 may be impacted by smoke for short periods and appropriate signage and/or personnel will be in place for traffic control if needed. Smoke may also be visible from the surrounding areas.

For more information about the Refuge's prescribed fire program or to see if a planned burn may impact your visit, you may contact the Refuge Office (843/335-8350 or carolinasandhills@fws.gov).

Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge in Chesterfield County is a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge contains 46,000 acres of rolling sand hills dominated by the longleaf pine-wiregrass ecosystem. This ecosystem provides for the needs of more than 300 wildlife species and 900 species of plants. The refuge is open year-round for wildlife-dependent recreation: thousands of visitors participate in fishing, wildlife observation, hunting, nature photography, hiking and environmental education programs and events.

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>.

End of Release