

News Release

Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge

5003 Hallett Circle

Cape Charles, VA 23310

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge Plans Prescribed Burn

Cape Charles, VA – Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge is planning a prescribed burn to occur sometime between January and March of 2022. Once a specific date is determined, a wildland firefighter crew plans to burn approximately 100 acres of shrub habitat within the west and central shrublands management units. The west central shrubland unit is located west of Fitchetts Road and south of the Refuge Visitor Center. The central shrublands unit is a rectangular area that is surrounded by a loop of refuge roads. The burn site is located directly across Hallett Circle from the Refuge Headquarters.

Our Refuge uses prescribed burns as a tool to manage vegetation. These management units are comprised of mostly warm and cool season grasses, tall forbs, briar thickets, dense shrubs (*Myrica*, *Baccharis*), small trees and woody encroachment of loblolly pine that benefit from periodic burning. This prescribed burn will set back succession, reduce exotic species and remove dense ground vegetation (i.e. Japanese honeysuckle). Our goal is to enhance this habitat for shrub dependent breeding birds.

This prescribed fire is one of a series that will take place over the next few years to address ongoing habitat management needs throughout the refuge. Future burns will address vegetation management within several other units.

Wildland firefighters ignite prescribed burns under a pre-determined set of conditions, in order to accomplish specific resource management objectives. These conditions include weather, fuel moisture and resource availability. All prescribed burns will be conducted as interagency projects, with local support, under the guidance and direction of trained and experienced U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildland firefighters.

We anticipate the burn to take one to two days to complete. Smoke from the burn may be visible in and around the Cape Charles area. Take additional care if you are driving in smoky areas - reduce your speed and turn on your headlights.

For the safety of our visitors, the Butterfly Trail and Bunker Overlook Tail with accompanying parking area will be closed during the duration of the prescribed burn. Fitchetts Road and access

to the boat ramp will be periodically restricted to allow free flow of support services to the fire. Please expect temporary closures to Fitchetts Road.

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 www.fws.gov.

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