

# News Release



**Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge**  
**241 Pleasant Plains Road**  
**Basking Ridge, NJ 07920**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: THROUGH APRIL 2017**

## **CONTROLLED BURN AT GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE** **TO BENEFIT WILDLIFE AND VISITORS**

The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service will be conducting a series of controlled burns (up to 4 days) between October 2016 and April 2017 on three wetlands at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Harding Township, NJ. Actual dates are dependent on weather conditions, favorable winds for smoke to rise and disperse, and the availability of trained wildland firefighters. The use of prescribed fire to restore habitat is part of the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, which was finalized November of 2014.

Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1960, in part, to provide habitat for migrating ducks and geese (waterfowl), and for the conservation of the nation's wetlands. Five artificial wetlands, also called impoundments, were constructed in the early 1970s and 1980s to provide migrating, nesting, brood-rearing, and feeding habitat for waterfowl. Over the past decade, woody vegetation has invaded three impoundments and standing dead vegetation has formed thick mats, reducing the amount of open water available for waterfowl.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regularly conducts prescribed burns on refuge lands to maintain and restore habitat for wildlife. The goal of these prescribed burns is to increase the amount of open water available to waterfowl by reducing the amount of standing dead vegetation and invading woody vegetation in three of the impoundments. Once restored, these impoundments will provide better feeding, nesting, brood rearing, and resting habitat for all waterbird species that use the refuge. In addition to improved habitat, visitors to the refuge also benefit from prescribed burns because fire promotes native species and habitats, thus increasing wildlife observation opportunities.

In total, we expect to burn 490 acres across the three impoundments. Each impoundment will require an active burning period of 2 to 6 hours, thus about 4 days will be needed to complete the three burns. Each burn will be carried out from mid-morning to late afternoon, contingent on the right weather conditions. Existing refuge roads and mowed fire lines around the burn units will be used to contain the fire within the burn units. Trained fire personnel with specialized equipment will ignite, monitor, and control the fire and its resulting smoke. In addition, water will be released back into the impoundments upon completion of the burns. Local emergency personnel, including the local police and fire departments, also will be notified prior to each prescribed burn. On days of prescribed burns, the refuge, Visitor Center, and Wildlife Observation Center will remain open to the public. However, Pleasant Plains Road and associated parking areas will be closed from just south of the Visitor Center parking lot to the South Gate of the refuge.

For additional information, please view our website ([https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great\\_swamp/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/great_swamp/)) or contact the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge office at 973-425-1222 Ext. 157.

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](http://www.fws.gov).