

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



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PRESCRIBED BURNS THIS SPRING WILL IMPROVE WILDLIFE HABITAT AT INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

GROSSE ILE, MICHIGAN – In spring 2013, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fire professionals plan to conduct prescribed burning in the coastal wetland habitats of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. The use of prescribed fire is a proven and well-established tool, essential to the management of quality habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife species. Improving habitat will also enhance the quality of recreation opportunities for hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts at the Refuge.

Controlled burns this spring will target herbicide-treated *Phragmites australis*, an aggressive, non-native, aquatic plant that has degraded the quality of coastal wetland ecosystems of the lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie over the last decade. *Phragmites australis* grows in dense stands up to 18 feet tall that destroy important habitat essential to healthy wetland ecosystems.

Exact dates of the burn are dependent on the availability of fire personnel and weather conditions. The fire will occur during conditions when the smoke will be directed in a path that limits potential exposure. The Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service annually treats approximately 70,000 acres of refuge lands with fire. Much planning and care are taken to craft a prescription for each controlled burn that is safe and achieves the desired ecological effect. In addition, communication and outreach strategies will be coordinated with local cities, fire departments, townships, corporations, and other government agencies prior to and throughout the implementation of the burn plan.

The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge incorporates more than 5,700 acres along 48 miles of the lower Detroit River and western Lake Erie. The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting, and restoring habitat for 29 species of waterfowl, 23 species of raptors, 31 species of shorebirds, over 100 species of fish, and over 300 species of birds. It is one of the few urban refuges in the nation and the first in North America to achieve an international designation. Unique habitats being managed within the Refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and riparian waterfront lands. Visit www.fws.gov/refuge/Detroit_River for additional information.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, an extensive network of lands and waters protected and managed especially for wildlife and its habitat and encompasses over 150 million acres of land and waters from north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the subtropical waters of the Florida Keys and beyond to the Caribbean and South Pacific. Both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is known for scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. Learn more at: www.fws.gov.

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