

News Release



**Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge
c/o Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESCRIBED BURN AT SHAWANGUNK GRASSLANDS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service wishes to inform the community that we may be conducting a prescribed burn in April 2016, on warm season grasslands at Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge in Ulster County, NY. The actual dates will depend on weather conditions, favorable winds for smoke to rise and disperse, and the availability of trained wildland firefighters. The use of prescribed fire is part of the Refuge habitat management program.

The objectives of the prescribed burn are to maintain and enhance migratory and wintering habitat for grassland breeding birds and foraging raptors, by stimulating growth of native warm-season grasses and reducing undesirable plants. The timing of the burn will hinder invasive, non-native plants and woody vegetation while promoting the growth of existing native grasses that provide habitat for State-listed birds such as the upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, vesper sparrow, horned lark, and short-eared owl. A controlled burn will also reduce the chance for future wildfires by removing standing dead vegetation that burns easily. The proposed burn unit at Shawangunk Grasslands NWR is 170 acres. Grasses will regenerate quickly following the prescribed burn, ensuring that this area continues to provide valuable foraging and nesting habitat for State-listed grassland birds, foraging raptors, song birds and other grassland birds.

Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge (whose staff also oversees Shawangunk Grasslands NWR) has safely conducted prescribed burns in previous years to restore wildlife habitat and control woody vegetation and invasive plant species there; the most recent burn occurred in 2014 within a similar habitat. The 2016 prescribed burn will be conducted between April 1-15 when ground vegetation is dry enough to burn, but wet enough for the fire to be easily controlled. Fire breaks will be established around the burn unit to prevent the fire from spreading on or off Refuge lands. Local emergency personnel, including the local police and fire departments will be notified prior to the prescribed burn. Specially trained personnel with specialized equipment will ignite and control the fire and its resulting smoke within prescription. The burn will only take place under the right weather conditions. It is estimated that the burn will be completed in one day, with an active burning period of 3-4 hours.

For additional information, please view our website http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Shawangunk_Grasslands/ or contact the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge Office at 973-702-7266.

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.