

News Release



Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESCRIBED BURN AT WALLKILL RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service wishes to inform the community that we will be conducting a prescribed burn in April or May 2016, on warm season grasslands at Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge in Vernon Township, NJ. 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 is to enhance and restore migratory and wintering habitat for songbirds and foraging raptors, by reducing undesirable plants and encouraging growth of native warm-season grasses. Removing invasive, non-native plants and woody vegetation will allow the growth of native grassland plants that provide good wildlife habitat. A controlled burn will also reduce the chance for future wildfires by removing standing dead vegetation that burns easily. The proposed burn unit at Wallkill River NWR is 64 acres. Once restored, this area will provide valuable foraging and nesting habitat for bluebirds, tree swallows, foraging raptors, song birds and other grassland birds.

The Refuge has safely conducted prescribed burns in previous years to restore wildlife habitat and control woody vegetation and invasive plant species; this area was last burned in 2014. The 2016 prescribed burn will be conducted during spring 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 1-2 hours.

For additional information, please view our website http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Wallkill_River/ 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.