

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
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<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>

News Release



For Immediate Release

Date: November 7, 2014

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Supervisory Refuge Ranger

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge plans to conduct prescribed burns in upcoming months

Folkston, GA... U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge near Folkston, GA are planning numerous prescribed burns during the next several months. Prescribed burns, such as the ones conducted at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, are used to restore longleaf pine habitat, control underbrush, and increase plant and animal diversity.

Prescribed burns are planned and carried out by trained firefighters operating under strict conditions, known as prescriptions. These prescriptions spell out the number of qualified firefighters and types and quantity of equipment that must be present to burn. The weather conditions, including wind speed and direction, humidity, fuel moisture, and other factors described in the plan must be within a specified range. Negative smoke impacts are a primary concern, and plans call for specific winds to minimize public impact on roads and communities. The refuge prescribed burn plan addresses a wide range of factors such as firefighter and community safety, weather, fuel conditions, smoke impacts, and resources needed to conduct the burns.

Prescribed burns are conducted on days when weather and ground conditions offer the best opportunities to meet management objectives. Due to difficulties in predicting the exact days the burns will be conducted, refuge officials may not be able to give advance notice to the public. Landowners adjacent to the burn areas, as well as state and local fire departments, are notified by refuge personnel prior to any prescribed burns and are timed so they minimize impacts on wildlife and people.

The prescribed fire treatments aid in the restoration of longleaf pine, promote desired maintenance of vegetation in Red-cockaded woodpecker colonies, and increase the diversity of native plants and wildlife. Other benefits include protection of communities and adjacent lands by reducing fuels and the potential threat of wildfire.

On the days when a prescribed burn will occur, portions of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge may be closed to the public. Please adhere to all signs, road closures, and instructions about closed areas provided by refuge and fire personnel. Questions, call the refuge office at 912-496-7366. To learn more about prescribed fire, visit: <http://www.goodfires.org/>

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The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area (East Entrance) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is the primary entrance managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is located 11 miles southwest of Folkston, GA off Hwy 121/23. The refuge is open daily and offers a variety of opportunities for the visiting public. Call 912-496-7836 or visit the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee for hours of operation, upcoming events, and entrance fee information.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook pages at www.facebook.com/okefenokeewildliferefuge or www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.