

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
2700 Suwannee Canal Road
Folkston, GA 31537
Phone: (912) 496-7836
Fax: (912) 496-7991
<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>

News Release



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Susan Heisey, 912-496-7366 ext 233
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 are planning to conduct prescribed burn projects over the next several months. These prescribed burns are used to restore longleaf pine habitat, reduce potential threat of wildfires, and increase plant and animal diversity.

Prescribed burns are planned and carried out by trained fire management staff under specific conditions, utilizing established parameters documented in an agency approved prescribed fire plan. These parameters take into account conditions including; wind speed and direction, humidity, fuel moisture, seasonality, and other contributing factors to ensure natural resource benefits are obtained at projects completion. These plans also identify the number of qualified personal, equipment types, and contingency resources during project implementation. Smoke impacts are a primary concern, and plans call for specific conditions to minimize public impact to roads and communities.

Prescribed burns are conducted on days when 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 more than a day 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 burns are scheduled 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 hazardous 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 observe 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 Main Entrance (Suwannee Canal Recreation Area) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge 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>.