

News Release



**Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex
340 Smith Road
Shirley, New York 11967**

Contact: Michelle Potter, Refuge Manager
Phone: 631-286-0485
Fax: 631-286-4003

MARCH 7, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESCRIBED BURN AT THE SAYVILLE UNIT OF WERTHEIM NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, will conduct a controlled, prescribed burn between March 28 – April 30, 2016, at the Sayville Unit of Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge in West Sayville, NY. Actual dates will depend on weather conditions, favorable winds for smoke to rise and disperse, and the availability of trained wildland firefighters. The proposed burn unit is 41 acres and consists of warm season grasses and some shrubs and woody vegetation. The use of prescribed fire is a vital part of the Unit's habitat management program.

The Sayville Unit is a unique maritime grassland community, which supports the largest population of the federally endangered sandplain gerardia (*Agalinis acuta*) in the State of New York. The Unit also provides habitat for rare wildflowers, as well as butterflies and moths. The objectives of the prescribed burn are to: enhance habitat for sandplain gerardia; increase native warm season grasses and forbs; and reduce woody vegetation and non-native, invasive plants. Anticipated results include healthier native plant growth and better habitat for migratory birds, pollinators and other wildlife. A prescribed burn will also reduce the risks of future catastrophic wildfires by removing standing dead vegetation.

Service staff have safely conducted prescribed burns in previous years to enhance and restore wildlife habitat, and control woody vegetation and invasive plants. The Sayville burn will take place during the late winter/early spring season when the ground vegetation is dormant and dry enough to burn, but wet enough to prevent an extreme fire. Fire breaks around the burn unit will prevent the fire from spreading on and off Service property. Emergency personnel, including the local police and fire departments, will be notified prior to the prescribed burn. Service staff estimate that the burn will be completed within 7 days or less. For additional information, questions or concerns, please view the website <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/sayville> or contact the Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex Office at 631-286-0485.

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.