



News Release

Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Block Island NWR □ John H. Chafee NWR at Pettaquamscutt Cove □ Ninigret NWR □ Sachuest Point NWR □ Trustum Pond NWR
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For Immediate Release

January 6, 2016

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Wildland Urban Interface Project Scheduled at Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), in cooperation with Charlestown Fire Department and RIDEM, will be creating mechanical fuel breaks along portions of the northern and eastern boundary of the Ninigret NWR in an effort to reduce hazardous woody fuels accumulations. This project will create defensible space to adjacent homes, aid in the control of wildfires, and assist in controlled burns. Defensible space provides fire departments a safer means of controlling unwanted wildland fires while protecting neighboring homes. Additionally, the combination of mechanical thinning and future controlled burns will help increase overall forest health and enhance habitat for wildlife.

The project area is along the refuge border adjacent to Lewis Trail and South County Trail (Route 112). Professional contractors will use an excavator equipped with a mechanical mulching head to thin and remove undesired fuels that have built up over the years. The fuel break will average 150 feet in width, retaining large older trees while removing excessive smaller trees, brush, and downed logs that increase the risk of wildfire. The project is scheduled to begin mid-January and may continue into February.

Mechanical equipment operations can create flying debris and falling hazards within 200 feet of the equipment. This portion of the refuge is closed to visitors; therefore, we do not anticipate any hazards to the public. Neighbors can expect to see and hear equipment working during daylight hours until the project is completed. Any questions or comments concerning the project should be directed to refuge staff Nick Ernst (nick_ernst@fws.gov), (401) 364-9124 ext. 19 or David Walker (david_walker@fws.gov), (401) 364-9124 ext. 25.

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.