



National Fire Plan

Prescribed Fire Season Starts in the Midwest States

MINNESOTA - As sure as the snow and ice melting from lakes and migratory birds returning to their breeding grounds are signs of spring, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepares for the start of another prescribed fire season.

Through mid-June, the Service mobilized equipment to conduct prescribed fires on Service-managed National Wildlife Refuges and Wetland Management Districts throughout Minnesota and other Midwest states. Prescribed fire is one of several tools used by the Service and other land managers to reduce the risk of wildfires on lands near populated areas and improve wildlife habitat.

While the landscape may not appear completely green after a burn, fire produces great benefits to native plants, grassland birds and other wildlife. Prescribed fire simulates historic, naturally occurring wildfires that stimulate growth of prairie plants and grasses while removing invasive trees and other undesirable vegetation.

By mid-June the Service's Midwest Region had completed prescribed burns on 61,597 acres, and removed hazardous fuels by mechanical means on 1,145 acres. Last year, Service fire crews used prescribed fire to burn more than 45,746 acres.

Each year, the Service targets a set number of acres it hopes to burn," said Dave Lentz, regional fire program manager, "but accomplishing the goal depends on weather and other factors. When weather, availability of fire crews and budgets are cooperating, we can exceed our targets."

Before a burn begins, wind speed and direction, temperature, relative humidity and fuel conditions are measured, as well as a number of other considerations such as smoke dispersal and proximity of nearby buildings.

"We want the public to know that safety is our primary concern on all of our fires," Lentz said.

Contact Dave Lentz, 612/713-5366
