



National Fire Plan

Making room for wildlife and keeping communities safe

When a dark column of smoke rose over Upper Pahranaagat Lake on Pahranaagat National Wildlife Refuge on January 12, even the folks in Alamo, Nevada eight miles away, could see it.

The refuge was conducting a prescribed burn to open a bulrush and cattail area to wildlife, reduce breeding habitat for carp and reduce vegetation that could fuel a wildfire in endangered southwest willow flycatcher habitat. The burn also reduced hazardous fuels near a campground, lessening the chance that wildfire could move into an area that will soon be full of people.

The Panaca Fire Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife staff and a fire crew from the Las Vegas Bureau of Land Management combined their skills on the project, burning a total of 40 acres. In the remaining islands of bulrush, great blue herons and egrets hunt in the shallow lake margins while raptors hunt from nearby cottonwood trees, which were protected during the burn. Today thousands of nesting waterfowl can be seen resting and feeding on the refuge and is an excellent place for birdwatching, photography and hunting opportunities.

“We used a tractor and disc to cut a 150-foot black line around and between the trees to protect them. The day of the burn the wind was perfect, the day was clear and everything went off without a hitch,” said Merry Maxwell, refuge manager.

Pahranaagat NWR was established in 1963. Pahranaagat, as with many other National Wildlife Refuges, is located on the Pacific Flyway which stretches from Alaska/Canada to Mexico. The refuge hosts thousands of migratory birds each year. These migratory birds are attracted by Pahranaagat's 5,380 acres of marshes, open water, native grass meadows, cultivated croplands, and riparian habitat.

The refuge is a satellite of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

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