



News Release

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge
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fws.gov/refuge/sherburne

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Prescribed Burns Help Oak Savanna at Sherburne Refuge

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge is planning a series of prescribed burns to be conducted during the spring season to help maintain the natural habitats for wildlife and reduce the chance of wildfires outside the refuge. The refuge averages around 4,000 acres of prescribed burning each year.

Prescribed burns, fires that are carefully planned, are beneficial to native prairie and oak savanna plant communities at the refuge. The burns are conducted under a special set of guidelines for weather and safety called a "prescription." These prescriptions are planned to accomplish specific objectives for vegetation and wildlife management. Before a burn begins, temperature, relative humidity, fuel conditions, wind speed and wind direction are measured. Refuge staff takes into account smoke drift, nearby buildings, livestock and other safety factors when deciding whether to burn. According to Kris Larson, Fire Management Officer, the burn is conducted only if conditions meet the approved "prescription." "We want the public to know that safety is our utmost concern. By reducing fuels through prescribed burning, we not only benefit wildlife, but also minimize the threat that wildfires on or around the refuge may have to the surrounding public," says Larson.

Through habitat management programs, such as prescribed fire, Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge is restoring the natural ecosystem. The oak savanna ecosystem, with its plants and wildlife, is adapted to fire and depends on periodic burning for continued existence. While the refuge conducts prescribed fire annually, the same areas are not burned year after year. Prior to European settlement, these areas likely burned every three to ten years due to natural or human causes, and the refuge strives to replicate that historic pattern.

Prescribed burns at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge are planned to be conducted in April and May, or in the fall and winter, when weather and safety conditions are right to meet the objectives of the burns.

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge is located northwest of Zimmerman, with Refuge Headquarters off of County Road 9. For questions concerning the refuge's prescribed burns, call (763) 260-3473 or visit the website at fws.gov/refuge/sherburne. TTY users may reach the refuge through the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 560 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

For further information about programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Great Lakes Region, please visit fws.gov/midwest.