

Prescribed Fires Planned at Delaware Water Gap NRA

BUSHKILL, PA: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation is planning a series of prescribed fires in the coming weeks. The areas to be burned this year include approximately 40 acres of grasses, shrubs, and woodlands on the New Jersey side of the park along Mountain Road near Walpack Center.

Depending on favorable weather and site conditions, the first burns could take place during the second or third week in April. Because certain prescription parameters must be met (including wind speed, relative humidity, fuel moisture, and drought index), it is not possible to precisely schedule prescribed fires in advance. Roads, visitor use facilities, and hiking trails may be temporarily closed while burns are underway.

Prescribed fire is an approved tool for natural resource management throughout the National Park System and is part of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area's fire management program. The primary objectives of the prescribed fire program are: restoration and perpetuation of scenic and cultural landscapes, including native plant species; reduction of wildland fuel loading; and enhancement of wildlife habitat.

Prescribed fire is often more effective than either manual or mechanical removal of fuels. Air quality and smoke impacts will be monitored and relatively small areas will be burned in order to keep smoke to a minimum. A minimum of six firefighters and one fire engine will be on hand throughout the period while the fire burns and will patrol the area until the burn is declared out. Assistance may be provided by firefighters from other National Park Service units, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service, and The Nature Conservancy.

Copies of the prescribed fire plan are available to the public and may be obtained by contacting the Chief Ranger's Office at 570-426-2414.

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