

Forest Service

Midwin National Tallgrass
Prairie

Eastern Region

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News Release

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USDA Forest Service to conduct Prescribed Burning over next two weeks at Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie



WILMINGTON, III. (Sept. 5, 2019) – The USDA Forest Service will be conducting prescribed burning over the next two weeks in parts of the Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie. The South Henslow area south of Explosives Road is one of the areas marked for prescribed burning.

USDA Forest Service staff will initiate prescribed fire operations as weather patterns shift to favorable, modest temperatures and moderate humidity that is conducive to burning. Wind speed and direction, temperature, relative humidity and measurable moisture in vegetation are all taken into consideration.

At Midewin, since 1996, volunteers and staff have been working with over 275 native Illinois prairie plants in an effort to restore and enhance natural areas. Approximately 3,000 acres of land are actively undergoing restoration or enhancement, and several tools are necessary to attaining restoration goals. Some of the restoration tools include invasive species control through judicious herbicide application; field mowing; hand-pulling invasive plants; brush removal and use of prescribed fire. Use of prescribed fire is among the most effective and necessary pieces of the restoration process.

Prescribed fire reduces hazardous fuels; minimizes the spread of plant and animal disease; removes invasive species that threaten species that are native to an ecosystem; provides forage for animals; improves habitat for threatened and endangered species; recycles nutrients back to the soil; and promotes the growth of forbs, tallgrasses, wildflowers and other plants.

Although careful planning and preparation for the use of prescribed fire takes place, smoke is a natural by-product of fire, and some amounts are unavoidable.

Over the next two weeks, the public may see smoke or smell fire in various areas surrounding Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie as a result of prescribed fire activities associated with our prairie restoration program.

As available, prescribed fire updates and information will be posted online on the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/midewin>.

Photo Caption: Prescribed burning on the USDA Forest Service - Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie - South Patrol Road Prairie Photo by Vance Hazelton

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The U.S. Forest Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a mission of sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service's Eastern Region includes 20 states in the Midwest and East, stretching from Maine, to Maryland, to Missouri, to Minnesota. There are 17 national forests and one national tallgrass prairie in the Eastern Region. For more information, visit www.fs.usda.gov/R9.

The U.S. Forest Service manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Public lands the Forest Service manages contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$7.2 billion per year. The agency has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about

80 percent of the 850 million forested acres within the U.S., of which 100 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live. For more information, visit www.fs.fed.us.

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