

now been reduced to less than 1% of their original area and are one of the rarest communities globally.

**Do we need to keep burning every year?**

Prairie restoration may initially require two or three annual burns, after which the prairie should require less frequent burning to sustain the conditions to support the prairie community.

**Will smoke from the burn pollute the air and cause discomfort to neighbouring residents?**

These burns are conducted only under very specific weather conditions, including wind speed and direction. Favourable conditions are when the wind speed and direction will disperse smoke away from developed areas as much as possible.

**Could the burn escape and endanger nearby residences and private property?**

The burn is controlled with man made barriers to contain the fire. Barriers include paved roads, trails, deciduous forest, lakes and rivers. If the weather conditions are not ideal the burn will not proceed. Additionally the prescribed burn crew has forest fighting equipment and personnel on site to suppress fire that may cross the pre determined boundaries.

**When will the prescribed burn occur?  
Can the public watch?**

The prescribed burn is completed over a two day, eight hour period. For safety

reasons the public will not be allowed access to the burn sites during the actual prescribed burn. However the public may observe the operations from a safe location to be determined by the fire staff.

Since weather is difficult to predict with certainty the time of the burn is set within 48 hours of the selected day. The burn takes about 1-2 hours to complete and neighbouring residents will receive notification of the dates prior to the actual burn.



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**Prescribed Burn  
Pamphlet**



Photos sourced from Lands and Forest website

Part of the Rice Lake Plains  
Joint Initiative

# INFORMATION ON PRESCRIBED BURNS

## Key Messages

- Between March 20th and May 12th 2007, a total of approximately 30 hectares of the County Forest will be burned with a *prescribed burn* to help promote re-generation of oak and oak-pine savannah.
- Oak savannah and prairie are significant ecosystems that rely on periodic fires to keep them healthy. The lack of fire in these ecosystems has allowed non prairie species to thrive, thereby degrading the savannah habitat.
- This prescribed burn project is in partnership between the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the County of Northumberland.
- It is important to do these burns for prairie restoration as these ecosystems are rare at the provincial, national and global level.

## Q&A

### What is a prescribed burn?

It is a deliberately set fire that burns grasses and leaves as well as a small amount of woody brush that is on the ground. Such fires are initiated by highly trained professionals who understand the appropriate time to set such a fire so that it will remain under control. The desired result is to kill or set back woody plants and invasive species that out compete the native prairie species.

### Who is responsible for setting and controlling the burn?

The "Fire Boss" and his associated workers take charge of the technical aspects of setting and controlling the fire. The Fire Boss visits the site six months prior to the burn to review the type of fuel (grasses and brush) on the site. After preparing a burn plan he begins a detailed review of weather data as soon as the ground is clear of snow. Daily rainfall is also monitored. The Fire Boss then determines when the site is dry and considers other factors such as expected temperatures, humidity levels and wind patterns. From this information he determines when to burn the site. There are some years when the weather conditions are never right and the burn cannot be done.

### How do you determine success?

The impact of the burn is obvious to those trained to identify plants and evaluate the impact on different species. The desired effect is to see increased vigor and numbers of prairie species, while at the same time see reduced growth and distribution of invasive species. Prairie plants are generally sun loving, if prairies become overgrown with trees and shrubs they begin to suffer so the fire helps regenerate these species.

### What impact will the fire have on wildlife?

Because the fire moves relatively slowly (walking pace) large animals have no difficulty leaving the vicinity. Small mammals can either run or burrow away from the fire. Any reptiles and amphibians that might be found in prairie habitat are not yet active until after the burning season. Many birds, butterflies and other insects will ultimately benefit from the fire as the habitat becomes enhanced after the burn.

### Why are prairies and savannahs so special?

Prairie and savannah communities used to cover one million square kilometers in Ontario, they have