



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...January 23, 2008

PRESCRIBED BURN PLANNED TO SAFEGUARD OKEFENOKEE AREA

Flames are expected to lap near the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge in late January and early February, but they will be in expert hands, according to the Georgia Forestry Commission.

“When weather conditions are favorable, we will be conducting prescribed burns,” said Frank Sorrells, Waycross District Manager. “The objective of these burns is to reduce hazardous fuels, such as dry leaves and debris, which exist on land adjacent to the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge. That will help reduce the possibility of wildfires and enhance safety for local residents.”

The Georgia Forestry Commission will conduct the burns on state and private lands surrounding the refuge in Charlton, Clinch, and Ware counties between January 22 and February 29. The GFC is working in conjunction with the Greater Okefenokee Association of Landowners, a group of 25 landowners surrounding the swamp.

Prescribed burning is a tool used by professionals to lessen the risk of wildfires getting out of control. Performed under strict wind, temperature and humidity conditions, prescribed burning also improves wildlife habitat, helps control invasive species, helps prepare sites for reforestation, and improves property access, among other benefits. Winter is generally considered the best time for prescribed burning because weather conditions often fall within optimal burn parameters.

“People in the southeast Georgia area can expect to see some smoke during these burn periods,” said Sorrells. “Because the burns are carefully planned and monitored, effects should be minimal.” Notification will be provided to affected areas on a daily basis. Anyone who is sensitive to the effects of smoke may choose to remain indoors on days that prescribed burns are conducted.

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