

Prescribed Burn FAQs



Before, and after a prescribed burn

What is Prescribed Burning??

Prescribed burns are a management technique used by Oakland County Parks' Natural Resources Management Unit to maintain and restore the ecological function of natural communities within Oakland County Parks. Trained personnel set fires within contained areas of the parks when weather conditions allow for the safe application of fire. The fire is then managed as it burns through fuel (vegetation) in a discreet area before self-extinguishing when the allowed fuel is expended.

Why use Prescribed Burns?

Burning has historically been an integral part of managing natural communities, such as prairies, in the Midwest and was regularly implemented by Native Americans for a variety of reasons before European colonization. Today, fire is predominantly utilized by land managers to achieve restoration of native plant communities and invasive species control. Most native plant communities in southern Michigan are adapted to periodic burning and are reliant on them to maintain structure, diversity, nutrient cycling and promoting habitat for wildlife. Furthermore, non-native invasive plants are set back by burning, thus managers can utilize burns to achieve two goals at once.

Are Prescribed Burns Safe?

Yes. OCP works with local fire departments, the Oakland County Sheriff's Office and licensed contractors to ensure the safety of park patrons, wildlife, staff and infrastructure. OCP sends notifications of our burns to local landowners, neighbors and township officials in advance of all burns and receives burn permits from the local fire departments after developing rigorous burn plans. A licensed contractor, or our in-house burn manager, oversees all our burns and ensures that weather conditions are suitable for burning. In addition, all staff and contractors are specifically trained to implement and control prescribed fire and stay in contact with the burn manager or burn boss throughout the entire process.

When can you use a Prescribed Burn?

Prescribed burns are conducted under specific weather conditions. Burns are only conducted on days when wind directions and speeds will be consistent so that managers can better predict how the fire will behave and ensure that smoke is able to safely rise and carry away from the site. Further, burns are conducted under conditions that allow the fire to burn and carry through the unit but will not create overly intense fires. This also keeps the fire behavior predictable and reduces the chances that it can spread out of the manager's control.

When and where are burns conducted?



Prescribed burns take place in the late fall or early in the spring in order to limit the impact on wildlife and occur when weather conditions are ideal.

Burns generally take place at the following Oakland County Parks locations:

- Addison Oaks County Park, north of Rochester
- Groveland Oaks County Park near Holly
- Highland Oaks County Park in Highland Township
- Independence Oaks County Park near Clarkston
- Orion Oaks County Park in Orion Township
- Rose Oaks County Park in Rose Township
- Springfield Oaks County Park in Davisburg

For more information on OCP's Natural Resources Management Program, visit OaklandCountyParks.com. Join the conversation on Facebook, X and Instagram.