



National Park Service
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Grand Canyon News Release

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Prescribed fire scheduled to occur on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park in next several days if conditions allow

Grand Canyon, Ariz. - A prescribed fire is scheduled to take place on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park in the next several days if conditions allow. The 6,200-acre Walla Valley prescribed burn unit is located in the Walla Valley and Point Sublime area, approximately 5 miles west of the North Rim developed area.

In an effort to simulate natural fire events in the north rim forests, the Walla Valley prescribed burn will use a point source ignition technique intended to mimic receiving a group of lightning ignitions. These ignition points will be allowed to burn in all directions in the same way a naturally ignited fire would burn. The fire is expected to burn over a period of at least 3 weeks, exposing it to a variety of weather and wind conditions. As a result, it is expected that the effects of the Walla Valley prescribed burn will more closely resemble a natural fire than the effects seen on most conventional prescribed burns.

During the Walla Valley prescribed burn, smoke columns will be visible for several weeks, but will be most visible during the first ten days of the project as the ignition points burn towards each other. After the ignition points have burned into each other, the smoke should become less noticeable.

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Sections of the W4 road and W1 roads to Point Sublime will be closed for approximately three weeks. Backcountry visitors that could be affected by these closures will be notified in advance, and when possible, will be accommodated elsewhere in the park.

Fire managers use prescribed fire to restore and sustain the fire-dependent ecosystems that surround the Grand Canyon. Benefits from these fires include reducing hazardous fuels that can lead to more intense wildfires, sustaining ecological processes like nutrient and biomass recycling, balancing plant regeneration and mortality, and providing a diversity of habitats for native plants and animals.

Prescribed fires are ignited when environmental factors such as wind, temperature, and relative humidity are favorable, in order to meet specific resource objectives. Resource objectives on this fire include: mimicking a natural fire event on the North Rim; reducing accumulations of forest fuels that exist in the burn unit; and maintaining forest and fuel conditions that will allow for future natural starts to be managed under a wildland fire use strategy. Under a wildland fire use strategy, natural fire starts would not be suppressed, but would be managed for resource benefit.

Thorough planning is used to minimize smoke impacts; however, it is impossible to predict weather patterns and smoke behavior with complete accuracy. Once the burn is ignited, smoke impacts may be possible on Highway 67 and in the North Rim developed area. Since smoke settles when the air temperature cools and lifts during daylight hours when the air temperature warms, smoke impacts may also occur along the Colorado River and in the inner canyon at night and during the early morning hours.

Prior to prescribed burning, Grand Canyon National Park fire managers will evaluate weather conditions and coordinate with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. If conditions do not meet predetermined standards for air quality, the burn will be postponed until conditions are appropriate.

For further information about the Walla Valley Prescribed Burn, please contact the park's Public Affairs Office at (928) 638-7779 or visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/grca.