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Commissioner

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Department of
Natural Resources

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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State to Conduct Prescribed Burns at Creamer's Field

(Fairbanks, AK) – The Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOF) will be partnering with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to conduct multiple prescribed burns at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge near Fairbanks starting as early as Monday, May 13 – weather and fuel conditions permitting.

The burn total will affect approximately 40 acres on the 2,500-acre refuge, and will occur on the main refuge fields to the east of the farmhouse and barns. Burning the dried grass now will enhance waterfowl and wildlife habitat, while also reducing the potential for wildfires later this summer when conditions are hotter and drier.

"These prescribed burns are a valuable tool for habitat management," said Nate LaShomb, a wildlife technician with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in Fairbanks. "Prescribed fire mimics the results of naturally occurring wildfires in a more controlled setting; the fires enhance soil quality and promote native plant diversity. Post-fire conditions benefit many species and results in more nesting habitat for migratory birds and increased browse for our resident moose."

Smoke from the fire will likely be visible throughout Fairbanks during the burn, but efforts will be made to minimize smoke impacts to the public. The refuge will remain open during the prescribed burns, but specific areas may be closed for firefighter and public safety. Signs will be posted at trailheads to alert visitors of any closed areas.

The prescribed burn also provides valuable, hands-on training for DOF's wildland firefighters as they prepare for the upcoming wildland fire season. It takes about 12 people to light and monitor the fire, and fire managers expect the project to take one to two operational periods to complete.

"Burning the grass at Creamer's Field helps provide our firefighters with an excellent opportunity to put their training to work in advance of the upcoming fire season," **said Fairbanks Area Fire Management Officer Gordon Amundson.**

Firefighters will not start the burn if the temperature, wind speed and direction, relative humidity and other conditions exceed the parameters laid out in the burn plan. A test burn will be conducted to make sure conditions are favorable on the day the burn is scheduled.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages the Creamer's Field refuge to provide habitat for migratory waterfowl and for compatible public uses including wildlife viewing, research, nature education and other forms of nonmotorized recreation.

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