

Sand Creek Regional Greenway's Prescribed Eco-Burn

Denver Parks and Recreation Natural Areas Program in conjunction with the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership are in the final planning stages for a prescribed burn on several acres of the Sand Creek Regional Greenway trail. The area targeted is south of Smith Road, north of Sand Creek and west of Havana Street. April 1, 2009, is the target date.

Historically, Sand Creek has flooded from time to time as all creeks and rivers do, and prior to settlement, there were periodic prairie fires that swept through the area. These floods and fires served as natural cleansers of vegetation overgrowth in and around the creek. Open space managers have learned that fires have great benefits to the land, native vegetation and wildlife as they control and eradicate non-native vegetation, invasive and noxious weeds and promote native grasses and recycle nutrients in the soil.

Some frequent concerns expressed by those in close proximity to a prescribed burn are:

Safety: The fires will be small and will be closely monitored, controlled by well-equipped and fully trained staff with Fire Department personnel and fire suppression equipment to assist on the day of the burn.

Air Emissions: Proper air quality permits have been received. Steps are taken to minimize the smoke and emissions from burns are actually *less* than those from a gasoline powered engine mowing a comparably sized site.

Wildlife: Rodents (mice and rabbits) and other animals take cover in burrows or seek undisturbed safe areas; birds will fly away. Within in weeks, new growth (more native species) and habitat improvement from the burn soon benefit the wildlife in the area.

Notification: Presently, the burn will take place April 1 and possibly April 2 starting at 7:00 a.m. However, we do have a window of time the first two weeks of April for backup. Conditions for the burn are dependent on wind direction and speed, temperature and humidity. These are critical for everyone's safety and for the success of a burn. Even though a particular date is given, cancellation could occur if weather conditions change significantly. We will make every effort to notify the media and the Stapleton neighborhood in a timely manner.

Re-growth: Revegetation of native grasses will occur rapidly as seeds germinate quickly in the warm soil and sunlight. Keep in mind that restoration of disturbed and degraded land is a slow process up to five or more years. However, a controlled burn shortens the length of time by removing debris, weed competition, and potential weed seeds.

Please be assured that this ecological burn on the greenway is to enhance and to help the natural habitat. As we work with Denver Parks and Recreation, we will notify you in advance of the burn event and place signage along the trail where it is feasible to do so. The area being designated as a burn site will be monitored to document the effects of a burn and a follow-up article on the outcome and specific benefits noted will be forth coming.

Visit our web sites www.sandcreekgreenway.org and the Natural Areas Program www.denvergov.org/parks/naturalareas for information on wilderness in the city and for updates on this and other events. You may also call or email Kate Kramer with any questions. She can be reached at 303-468-3263 or Kkramer@sandcreekgreenway.org

As spring approaches, enjoy the Sand Creek Regional Greenway trail!