

Fall prescribed fire activities in the Bald Hills

October 11, 2023



Redwood National and State Parks plans to conduct a series of prescribed burns this fall in the prairies and oak woodlands of the Bald Hills east of Orick, California. The prescribed fire season in the parks begins in early October as weather conditions permit.

This year, fire will be used as a management tool in eight specific burn units in the Bald Hills: Eastside, Upper Dolason, Lower Dolason, Child's Hill, Lower Elk Camp, Pigpen, Tick Prairie, and South Boundary. The eight units combined are approximately 1,422 acres.

For thousands of years, Yurok, Tolowa, Chilula, and Hupa people managed prairies, oak woodlands, and some coastal areas that are now within the parks with periodic fire to keep them cleared. Intentional burning provided grazing and hunting areas for elk and deer, maintained important resources like tanoak trees and various basket weaving materials, kept trail and travel corridors open, and lessened the prevalence of parasites like ticks in the prairies. Early European Americans who later ranched these same lands continued the practice of broadcast burning until it was outlawed by the state in the 1930s. Since then, many of the prairies and oak woodlands have become encroached with Douglas fir and other conifers which can eventually eliminate these important plant communities.

The park's 2021 Fire Management Plan provides for the use of fire to restore natural and cultural processes, manage exotic plants and conifers encroaching into prairie and oak woodland plant communities, and to educate the public about the role of fire in the parks. The parks have successfully used prescribed fires to achieve these objectives since the early 1980s.

If you are in the parks over the next couple of months, there will likely be additional activity and equipment on and near Bald Hills Road. Smoke may linger on the roadways and traffic control may be in place. Please be cautious for your safety as well as the safety of the fire crews working on the prescribed burns.

For further information, please contact Bryan Boatman at (707) 496-0258.