



Partnerships Spark Further Prescribed Fire Activities

April 13, 2021

Meewasin will be conducting prescribed fire activities through April and May at the Northeast Swale. Do not be alarmed by minimal smoke in the area.

The prescribed fire process is not just lighting a match and watching the grass burn, it takes months (and in some cases years) to plan, prepare and train. This is while waiting for the opportune time for weather conditions to become available that meet the very specific prescription for the burn. “The prescribed fire season each spring and fall tends to be quite short, so we need to take action when we can. Weather at this time of year and the non-green grass make a perfect mix of conditions for burning”, explains Meewasin’s Resource Management Officer, Renny Grilz. Ideal conditions for prescribed fires is moderate humidity, lower temperatures and low winds from a consistent direction to blow smoke away from neighborhoods and key roads.

Between the months of April and May, Meewasin is planning to conduct prescribed fire activities at the following locations:

1. Northeast Swale at the Ecological Zone north of Fedoruk Road and south of McOrmond Drive along Range Road 3050 (Lowe Road).
2. Northeast Swale at the Recreational Zone between Fedoruk Road, Agra Road and Central Avenue.
3. Northeast Swale along the Greenway between the Northeast Swale and Aspen Ridge neighbourhood.

Therefore, smoky conditions can be expected in the northeast area of Saskatoon.

The goal of the prescribed fire is to:

- a. Reduce the cover of invasive species to allow for the process of restoration to begin in the Evergreen Storm Water dry pond in 2021.

- b. Remove dead grass cover between the fence line of the Northeast Swale and the Greenway sidewalk to allow for clean up of debris and reduce fire risk before the seeding of native grasses along the Greenway in 2021.
- c. To enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity in the Northeast Swale Ecological Zone by introducing the natural process of fire to grassland areas in a safe way.

Prescribed fire takes controlled burning to the next level with planning that is part of Meewasin's Valley-wide Resource Management Plan. This plan details where, when and how to conduct burning for optimal restoration of plant life and habitat.

Recent funding and partnerships formed from the Weston Family Prairie Grassland Initiative has resulted in the creation of the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange. This initiative has allowed Meewasin to take the lead on a more comprehensive prescribed fire program and has enabled more enhancement and restoration of native prairie in Saskatchewan and across the prairie provinces.

The prioritized prescribed fire activities will involve several partnering agencies skilled in using prescribed fire as a grassland management tool including City of Saskatoon - Naturalized Parks Program, University of Saskatchewan - Plant Sciences Department, Saskatchewan Provincial Parks, Nature Conservancy of Canada – Saskatchewan Region, Canadian Wildlife Service and several other professionals volunteering their time.

Grilz continues about the prescribed fires, "Safety is the number one priority with prescribed fires. We want the public to understand that a prescribed fire serves many benefits to the area. One of these benefits is a lower risk of an out-of-control wildfire being sparked." Burning is a sustainable approach to the management of biodiversity in the Meewasin Valley. It can enhance grassland bird habitat by reducing shrub cover and dead grass material that will benefit ground nesting birds. This process will also enhance the restoration of native grass by reducing the competition from invasive species.

Prescribed fires are part of Meewasin's overall resource management plan to conserve natural areas and the native plants and animals that make their homes there. Watch for many other active conservation measures throughout the year, such as targeted conservation grazing and replanting of native plant species.

For more information, contact Meewasin at 306-665-6887 or meewasin@meewasin.com

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About Meewasin Valley Authority

The Meewasin Valley Authority exists to ensure a healthy and vibrant river valley, with a balance between human use and conservation by:

- *Providing leadership in the management of its resources;*
- *Promoting understanding, conservation and beneficial use of the Valley; and*
- *Undertaking programs and projects in river valley development and conservation,*

for the benefit of present and future generations.

There are 67 square kilometers of land and over 90km of established trail, which has seen up to 1.87 million trail visits per year, in the Meewasin Valley. The area also features sites that help people to connect to nature through experiences such as Beaver Creek Conservation Area, the Northeast Swale, Saskatoon Natural Grasslands, the River Landing Spray Area, and the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink @Nutrien Plaza. Meewasin is a non-profit organization that relies on donations and volunteers for sustainability. To get involved or learn more visit www.meewasin.com