



Fire at Northeast Swale

April 22, 2021

While Meewasin, depending on the weather, hopes to be conducting *prescribed fire* activities through April and May at the Northeast Swale, an unidentified *uncontrolled fire* occurred at the Northeast Swale on April 21, 2021.

Confirmed by the Saskatoon Fire Department Communications & Public Engagement, Strategy & Transformation Division, a fire investigator attended the fire last night after receiving a call about someone burning garbage. The file is being turned over to Police for their follow-up on who was burning the garbage so they can pursue arson charges if/when someone is identified.

Meewasin has very strict conditions for prescribed fire activities and recent wind and dry conditions means conducting a prescribed fire would be too hazardous. Media is notified in advance for when conditions are safe enough for Meewasin to perform this resource management practice.

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. 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.

Controlled, prescribed fire helps to:

- a. Lower the risk of an out-of-control wildfire by removing dead grass and other fuel sources
- b. Reduce the cover of invasive species to restore native grassland species including wildflowers
- c. To enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity 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.

Renny Grilz, Resource Management Officer with Meewasin, explains that "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. [Learn more about prescribed burning here.](#)

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