



Meridian Township
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Okemos, MI 48864

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Township Board:

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Township Trustee

Frank L. Walsh
Township Manager

March 19, 2024

Dear Township Resident:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our plans to conduct a prescribed ecological burn planned for this spring on the Township-owned Davis-Foster Land Preserve, located at 5120 Van Atta Road, Okemos, MI 48864. More specifically, the burn will be conducted on Burn Unit 1, a 17 acre plot along the northern boundary of the preserve, which includes a wetland on its eastern end. The eastern edge of this unit also contains a mature and aggressive infestation of invasive black locust tree, which is currently being managed. The goals of this burn are to support a diversity of wetland and grassland wildflowers at Davis-Foster and to boost their seed production. An additional goal is to boost regeneration of beneficial oak species present at the site. Oaks are a fire dependent species and require prescribed burns for their survival. The burn will be taking place between now and April 10th if conditions are favorable. If conditions are not favorable this spring, the burn will commence in the spring of 2025 and be completed by April 10th, 2025. **Conditions must meet the parameters included in our burn plan in order to proceed. There will be no exception for this, and the burn will have to be postponed until next season to ensure the safest burn.**



(Above) Davis Foster Preserve Burn Unit 1 in red.



This site has been burned in past years and is split into burn units in order to preserve nesting sites for grassland birds found in the area. Burns are conducted at Davis Foster every four to six years with the exception of our new wetland site which was burned in 2021 and 2023. Burn breaks are maintained at this site, year round, to ensure a safer burn. Expect vegetation to be burned back completely, regenerating within 2-3 weeks post burn.

This burn will be safe and carefully controlled by trained personnel with David Borneman, LLC. The Meridian Township Fire Department will be on site to provide aid, if needed.

“Why Burn?” Fire was a regular and frequent component of our landscape here in southern Michigan. Many of our local ecosystems such as prairies, dry oak-hickory woodlands and certain wetlands historically burned frequently. The fire stimulated many of the plant species to grow more vigorously and discouraged others who were not adapted to the heat from the fire. Today, many non-native plant species have invaded our natural fire-adapted ecosystems, decreasing the diversity of native plants and animals. By bringing fire back to these sites we encourage the competitive advantage that native species have evolved with and restore the site to its former ecological health.

The prescribed burn is safe. The burn is done in cooperation and approval of the local fire department, which has issued a permit for this burn to be conducted. The company performing the burn has outlined the weather conditions, personnel, equipment, and other parameters needed for the burn to be conducted safely. Prior to burning, “burn breaks” will be created around the area to be burned to help control the fire. The burn is done in a slow and deliberate manner, with safety equipment on hand to monitor and control its spread. The burn will also be conducted in such a manner as to minimize the amount of smoke produced and to direct any smoke away from smoke-sensitive areas as much as possible. **Due to the burn being weather-dependent, it is impossible to predict exactly when it will occur, though if conditions are favorable then we will notify homeowners 1-2 days prior to the burn over social media, on our website, and through the constant contact email list.**

If you have any questions, concerns, or if you have any special needs that require you to be notified by phone on the day of the burn, you may contact me at **517-853-4614** or, **ecampbell@meridian.mi.us**.

Sincerely,

Emma Campbell
Land Stewardship Coordinator