

**Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Prescribed Fire
Valley Forge National Historical Park
go.nps.gov/vaofire**

Spring 2018 (Updated 2/9/18)

How many acres will be burned?

Five separate fields will be burned; totaling approximately 150 acres. The largest field is 80 acres and the smallest is 15.6 acres

Where are the fields that will be burned?

The five fields are located along and between Gulph Road and Route 23 – please refer to the project map for exact locations

Why was this area selected?

This area was selected because of a combination of preferred elements such as:

- These fields are not immediately adjacent to neighbors
- They have a diverse mixture of native and non-native plant species that will be assessed following the burn.
- They are within the Grand Parade, a high priority management area for the park

How many people will be working on the prescribed fire?

The prescribed fire plan recommends a minimum of 14 personnel to implement burning each field, and we anticipate additional personnel from other National Park Service sites, other federal land management agencies, the PA Bureau of Forestry, and other agencies..

How will NPS contain the prescribed fire?

To the extent possible, existing roads and trails are used as containment lines for the fields. As necessary, sensitive areas and field edges that do not have a road or trail will be mowed prior to ignition. The mowed area will be wetted with water. Additionally there will be a sprinkler line in place along the perimeter, as needed, to thoroughly wet down the control lines before the fire. Wind conditions and soil and vegetation moisture levels will dictate the exact time of ignition. If winds are too high or surrounding conditions are too dry the prescribed fire would be canceled and rescheduled for more favorable conditions.

Will historic features in the area be safe?

Yes, in a historic area like Valley Forge, cultural resources must be protected. These would include a reconstructed redoubt and entrenchments located in the northern fields, as well as monuments. We'll be protecting and monitoring significant features during the prescribed fire.

Are there areas locally that use prescribed fire to manage vegetation?

Yes, Gettysburg National Military Park, Fort Indiantown Gap, Antietam National Battlefield (Sharpsburg, MD), Richmond National Battlefield Park, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, several PA State Game Lands, and Longwood Gardens.

Have local fire groups and governments been contacted?

Yes, we have informed all local fire companies as well as all the adjoining townships and , the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry.

What is the cost of burning this area?

The average cost per acre is approximately \$150 per acre.

How is the burn being funded?

This project will be funded through an NPS fuels management funding source.

What exotic plant species is the burn targeting?

The burn will help control high priority invasive plants found in the fields, like Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*) and Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)

Safety precautions

Safety is the number one goal of the operation. All personnel working to conduct the burn are required to wear fire resistant clothing and carry fire shelters, similar to equipment used on a wildland fire. A prescribed fire plan describing safety and emergency response procedures has been completed and approved prior to implementation. EMT's will be on scene.

Injury to wildlife

Large mammals and birds will typically leave a burn area due to the level of human activity. This prescribed fire is not expected generate enough heat to harm wildlife sheltering underground and smaller mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians tend to seek shelter in holes and burrows to avoid injury. As an additional precaution, the field will be walked to identify and, if necessary, relocate wildlife prior to fire ignition.

Smoke concerns

Due to the size of the fields and grass fuel, which burns quickly, smoke problems should be minimal and of short duration. The column of smoke generated during burning should dissipate rapidly and should not be noticeable to park neighbors soon after burning operations are completed. Fields will be burned one at a time.

Artifacts in the ground

Archeological sites/ artifacts buried underground are protected. A pilot study at Valley Forge has shown that the speed at which the fire will move over the landscape and the short time until the vegetation has burned out has little-to-no impact on buried artifacts. The area will be surveyed by the park archeologist before and after the burn to locate exposed artifacts.

Effects on plants

The fire will remove dead vegetation and kill early spring invasive plants. This should produce more robust grass growth through the summer due to the removal of thatch, exposure of the soil to seeds, and an influx of nutrients from the ash. Woody plants should be killed back to ground level. It's expected the fields will require fewer mowing and herbicide applications over the next several years (3 to 4).

Training and qualifications

Personnel working on the project must meet federal prescribed fire qualification standards. Key personnel have years of experience conducting prescribed fires.

Use of prescribed fire in PA

Prescribed fire utilization is becoming a more common practice in PA among various agencies and groups including PA Bureau of Forestry, PA Game Commission, The Nature Conservancy, and the USDA Forest Service and Natural Resource Conservation Service. Several thousand acres are burned in PA annually.

Weather conditions

Weather conditions on site must be within parameters, referred to as a prescription, established in the prescribed fire plan. Personnel will obtain a spot weather forecast for the area from the National Weather Service, and will monitor temperature, relative humidity, and wind to ensure the criteria are within prescription throughout the duration of the prescribed fire.

If it gets away

If the prescribed fire escapes, resources on scene will extinguish any fire outside of the burn area as fast as safely possible; other firefighting forces can be called if needed. The prescribed fire plan contains contingency plans in the unlikely event that the prescribed fire escapes.

Who should I contact if I have further questions?

Contact the park Public Information Officer at 610-783-1008.