

PRESS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Division of Boating and Waterways | Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division | Office of Historic Preservation

For Immediate Release

October 10, 2022

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Prescribed Fire Operations Planned at Several State Parks in San Luis Obispo County

SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif. — California State Parks is planning to begin a series of prescribed burns in several coastal park units from October 2022 through March 2023. The effort will be carried out in cooperation with CAL FIRE, the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District, and the Morro Bay Fire Department.

Burns may occur in Hearst San Simeon State Park, Harmony Headlands State Park, Estero Bluffs State Park, Morro Bay State Park, and Montaña de Oro State Park. This work will include grassland and coastal scrub burns, as well as broadcast and pile burns in forested and urban/wildland interfaces to address diseased, dead, and downed trees.

These burns are part of the prescribed fire program for vegetation management, hazardous fuel load reduction, wildlife habitat improvement, and other ecological benefits. These treatments will enhance the health of the ecosystems by removing diseased materials, restoring essential nutrients to the soil, and reducing the chance of a catastrophic wildfire.

In grassland and scrub areas, fire will be reintroduced as a component of the ecosystem on a rotational basis. Forest prescribed burns will help in managing forest pests and pathogens in the park lands and will improve wildfire prevention in wildland-urban interfaces.

The prescribed burns are planned and coordinated with the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District to minimize the smoke impacts on surrounding communities. Community members can monitor the air quality in their neighborhoods by visiting SLOCleanAir.org for current conditions and forecasted air quality. All burning depends on weather and air quality conditions that are favorable for smoke dispersal. Should conditions such as weather or vegetation not be conducive for burning, the burns will be rescheduled.

Some public trails near the burn area may be closed the day of the burn. People traveling near the fire burn areas may see smoke from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the day of the burns. In the unlikely event you smell smoke, San Luis Obispo County urges you to take precautions and use common sense to reduce any harmful health effects by limiting outdoor activities.

Prescribed burns produce significantly less smoke than a wildfire does. If you see or smell smoke in your surroundings, officials recommend avoiding strenuous outdoor activity and remaining indoors as much as possible. These precautions are especially important for children, the elderly, and people with respiratory and heart conditions. **Please use extreme caution while driving near prescribed fire operations due to fire personnel and equipment in the area.**

California State Parks, Morro Bay Fire Department and CAL FIRE are adhering to the safety protocols set by public health officials and have made accommodations to limit exposure among first responders and field crews to protect staff from COVID-19 during prescribed burns.

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California State Parks provides for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Learn more at www.parks.ca.gov.

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