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## COUNTY OF FLUVANNA

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*"Responsive & Responsible Government"*

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### **RE: Pleasant Grove Park Wildlife Meadows Restoration Controlled Burn**

Dear Community Neighbors,

Fluvanna County will soon begin the next phase of meadow management and restoration at Pleasant Grove Park by conducting a series of prescribed controlled burns. The burns are planned for late February and will take place in two wildlife meadows, as indicated by the yellow encircled areas in the image below.



As part of the County's long-term meadow maintenance plan, controlled burns will allow us to retain these areas as valuable, and rare, wildlife habitat, as well as arrest the natural progression of these meadows into forest. The first two controlled burns are planned for February 2021 when wind, humidity, and other weather conditions are more likely to be favorable. Native grasses and wildflowers are dormant at this time of year and wildlife nesting has not begun.

Five years ago, the Fluvanna County embarked on a plan to create native wildlife meadows at Pleasant Grove. The first step, no longer mowing certain areas, created nearly 70 acres of wildlife meadows, some of the largest areas of native meadow on public property in Virginia, outside of national parks. In addition, two wildlife-food plots have been created within the meadows, mostly American Plum and Persimmon tree seedlings, to provide additional wildlife benefit. Recently the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors authorized the next phase of the meadow maintenance plan: prescribed (Rx) controlled burns. The practice of controlled burns was used by Native Americans and early European settlers in our area, who recognized the benefit of having these open fields to promote an abundance of wildlife. While the actual burn will be conducted by trained and experienced Virginia Department of Forestry personnel, the County is coordinating with many other agencies to prepare, conduct, and follow-up after the burn. The agencies involved in the planned burns include the:

Fluvanna County Fire Departments, Fluvanna County Sheriff's Office, Fluvanna County Public Schools, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Rivanna Master Naturalists, and Fluvanna Master Gardeners. After the burn, donated native grass and wildflower seeds will be planted, particularly in the areas disturbed by creating a fire line around the perimeter of the burned area.



The stewardship of Pleasant Grove has truly been a community undertaking, benefitting more than wildlife. Volunteers, including many first and second graders, have planted almost 1,000 donated hardwood and wildlife-food tree seedlings. Community volunteers and school-aged children have planted native wildflower and grass seeds in the meadows, helping to restore these areas suitable for abundant wildlife, including the return of bobwhite quail. Trails have been established through the meadows that provide park visitors abundant opportunities to view a variety of wildlife, including many songbirds, rabbits, foxes and birds of prey. The meadows are used for education programs as well, including the first and second grade annual field trips and monthly nature hikes. Citizen scientists monitor a bluebird nesting box trail with 34 boxes, who then provide the information to the Virginia Bluebird Society as we work to help restore the native bluebird population.

If you have questions about the planned controlled burns, would like to volunteer at the park, or visit the park, please contact Aaron Spitzer, Director of Parks and Recreation, by email at [aspitzer@fluvannacounty.org](mailto:aspitzer@fluvannacounty.org) or by phone at 434-589-2016.

Sincerely,

Aaron Spitzer

Director of Parks and Recreation