



## NEIGHBOR NOTIFICATION LETTER – 4/3/23 Prescribed Burn at Hiawatha Forest Open Space

Ottawa County Parks plans to conduct a prescribed ecological burn this spring on three acres at Hiawatha Forest. This burn will be safe and carefully controlled by trained personnel. Because the burn is weather-dependent, it is impossible to predict exactly when it will occur, though it is likely to occur between noon and 7:00 p.m. in the next few weeks.

**Why burn?** Fire used to be a regular and frequent component of our landscape in Michigan. Many of our local ecosystems such as prairies, dry oak-hickory woodlands, and certain wetlands burned frequently. The fire stimulated many of the plant species to grow more vigorously and discouraged others that were not adapted to fire's heat.

In 2007, Ottawa County Parks harvested the red pine plantation at Hiawatha Forest. Many wildlife species that are adapted to early successional ecosystem are using these logged areas. This includes many rare species and game species, such as American Woodcock. Prescribed fire is a cost effective management tool to manage for early successional ecosystems.

**The prescribed burn is safe.** The burn is done with the cooperation and approval of the local fire department, which will issue a permit for the burn. Ottawa County Park staff worked with Michigan DNR fire staff and Grand Valley State University fire educators to develop a burn plan that outlines the weather conditions, personnel, equipment, and other parameters needed for the burn to be conducted safely. Prior to burning, "burn breaks" were created around the area to be burned to help control the fire. Safety equipment will be on hand to monitor and control its spread. The burn will 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.

If you have any concerns, questions or if you have any special needs that require you to be notified by phone on the day of the burn, please contact Melanie Manion at Ottawa County Parks at (616) 738-4811.

Thank you.

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