



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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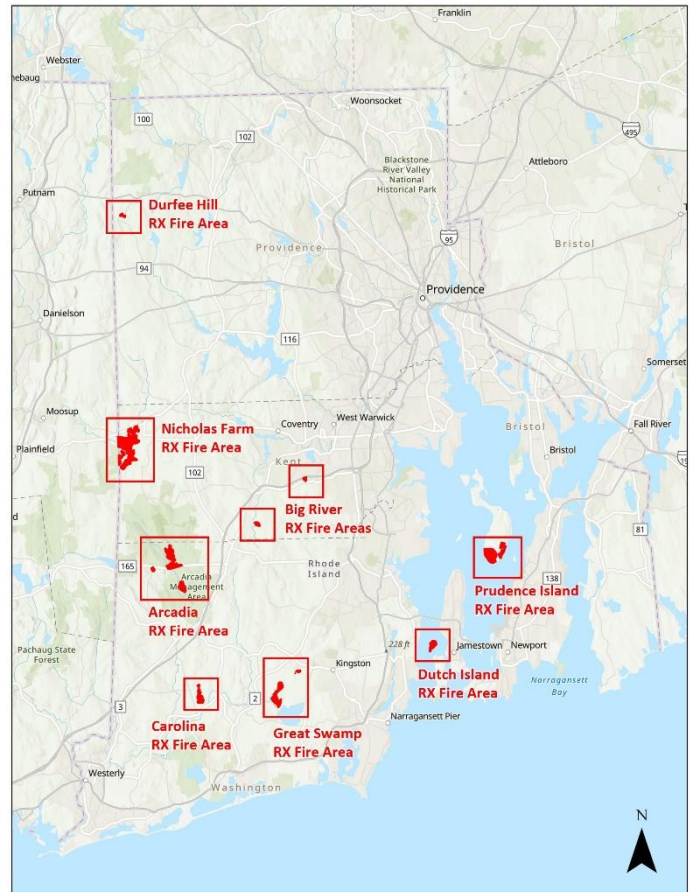
Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025

DEM RESUMING PRESCRIBED BURNS

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announces its plans to conduct low-severity prescribed burns on state lands on Prudence Island in Portsmouth, Exeter, West Greenwich, Coventry, Richmond, Glocester, Jamestown, and South Kingstown. The first prescribed burn of 2025 will take place this week on Prudence Island, ahead of [DEM's Forest Fire Program's](#) spring prescribed fire season. Typically, all prescribed burns are announced a day in advance due to weather and wind conditions. Prescribed, or planned, burning is a versatile tool that natural resources managers use for maintaining habitat diversity and to protect communities from extreme fires by reducing hazardous natural fuels.

DEM will advise the public again once it has identified a more reliable "burn window" in which to conduct a prescribed fire operation. The agency will further notify Rhode Islanders by timely social media posts and distributing flyers to abutting landowners and neighbors.

A burn window refers to when the environmental variables such as fuel moisture and weather conditions are balanced so that the fire will accomplish its goals, which include reducing fuels, modifying wildlife habitat, and restoring ecological function while remaining under control. DEM's "go/no-go" decision on which of the burns to conduct is often determined by wind speed and direction, to allow for the optimal dispersal of smoke. DEM burn managers are targeting parcels at Durfee Hill Management Area in Glocester, Pratt Farm in the Arcadia Management Area, Nicholas Farm Management Area in Coventry, Big River Management Area in West Greenwich, Prudence Island, Dutch Island in Jamestown, Carolina Management Area in Richmond, and Great Swamp Management Area in South Kingstown.



Wildfires are expected to become more frequent in Southern New England due to climate change. DEM is responding by [increasing the use of low-severity prescribed burns](#) to reduce the build-up of combustible materials on forest floors and grasslands and by [offering specialized wildfire training classes](#) to build staff and volunteer capacity. In 2024, DEM [treated 130 acres of state property with prescribed fire](#), nearly a threefold increase from 2023. In 2024, DEM conducted [shaded fuel break brush clearing projects](#) along various stretches of forestland on state lands to lessen the risk of uncontrolled wildfires. By increasing its use of prescribed fire, Rhode Island is better aligning its land management policies and practices with neighboring states. Among other benefits, common ecological restoration goals with other states help to strengthen climate change resilience across southern New England.



From burn to bloom: native pollinators and grassland habitat thrive at Pratt Farm following DEM's prescribed burns at this location.

Experts from [DEM's Forest Fire Program](#), a subsidiary of DEM's [Division of Agriculture and Forest Environment](#), leads the prescribed burns. They will employ detailed operational and safety plans. A prescribed burn plan developed by a qualified burn boss must be in place before a burn is conducted. Firebreaks and other site preparations are made. Fire behavior, fuels, and weather are monitored throughout the burn, and if the prescription parameters are exceeded, the fire is shut down. Abutting landowners are notified of fire dates, reasons, and expectations for the burn season. DEM burn managers have obtained the required local permits and an exemption from state air pollution control regulation Part 4: Open Fires ([250-RICR-120-05-4](#)). Managers also have communicated with the towns Fire Chiefs, Rhode Island Southern Firefighters League, US Fish and Wildlife Service, DEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife, and the DEM's Office of Air Resources.

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