

Frequently Asked Questions

Upper Credit Conservation Area - Controlled (Prescribed) Grassland Burn

1. What is a controlled (prescribed) burn?

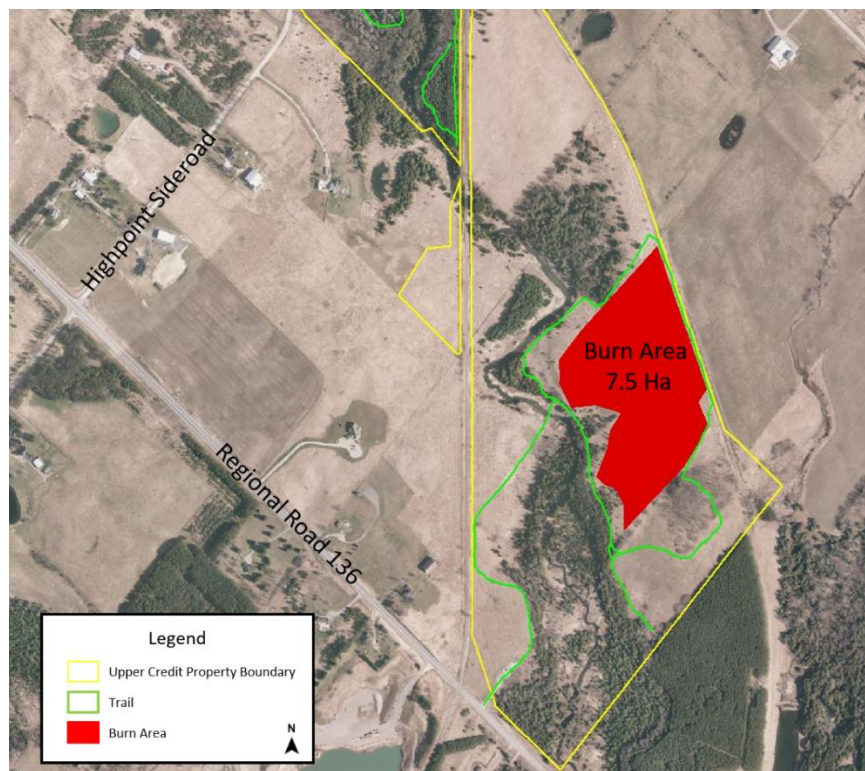
Controlled burns are carefully set and managed fires to help restore, maintain and protect prairie and grassland habitat. The fire is carefully managed by fire experts to burn low to the ground capturing dried grasses and leaves without harming larger trees.

2. Why is CVC conducting a controlled burn?

The goal of the controlled burn is to protect and enhance the established grassland at Upper Credit Conservation Area to maintain critical habitat for species at-risk such as eastern meadowlark, bobolink, and grasshopper sparrow. Burns are conducted in early spring when non-native plants are starting to grow, but the native species are still dormant. The fire removes the non-native plants and promotes the continued growth of native grassland species.

3. Where will the burn take place?

The burn will take place at Upper Credit Conservation Area located at 20073 Porterfield Road (Regional Road 136), Alton. The map below illustrates in red the sections of the conservation area that will be involved.



4. When will the burn take place?

The exact date of a controlled burn is very difficult to predict in advance since it requires extremely specific weather and site conditions. CVC's controlled burn will take place on a single day between April 1-May 31, 2020. CVC will send out notifications via email and social media 24-48 hours before the burn occurs to let nearby residents and park visitors know exactly when the burn will take place. Those who wish to receive email notifications about the burn can sign up here (add hyperlink to signup form).

5. What time of day will the burn take place?

The burn will begin around noon.

6. How long will the burn take?

The burn will take anywhere from one to two hours to complete and timing depends largely on site and weather conditions.

7. Will the burn impact the use of Upper Credit Conservation Area?

Yes, trails surrounding the burn site will be closed for the set up and duration of the burn. CVC staff will close the trail surrounding the burn site on the morning of the burn to allow the fire crew to prepare the site for ignition. Normal access and trail use will resume once the burn is complete and the fire crew has removed their equipment from the site.

8. Who is responsible for conducting the burn?

CVC has hired a burn boss who has been trained by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and has extensive experience in prescribed burning. The burn boss, along with their qualified fire crew, will be responsible for setting, controlling and extinguishing the fire.

9. How do you ensure the burn remains "controlled"?

Ignition will only take place under ideal site and weather conditions to ensure the wind speed and direction are favorable for the operation.

The fire crew will mow the perimeter of the burn location down to bare ground to create "fuel breaks" at least 1m wide. These fuel breaks will be pre-wetted before ignition using ATV sprayers with mounted water tanks.

During the burn, the Burn Boss will ignite and control the pattern of the fire to ensure fire lines are "burning into the black", meaning the fire is usually burning towards areas already burned so there is no more fuel and the fire self-extinguishes.

The fire is constantly monitored by an experienced fire crew and everyone is in constant radio contact with one another. Water filled backpack suppression units, multiple ATV units outfitted with water tanks and sprayers, as well as a forestry power pump connected to a water source will be on site.

10. Will there be smoke?

Under ideal weather conditions, smoke from the controlled burn will rise without impacting surrounding properties. Changing weather conditions, however, could lead to smoke temporarily reaching nearby residences. It is recommended that neighbours close windows and doors as a precaution on the day of the burn. People with sensitivity to smoke, especially young children and older adults, are encouraged to stay indoors at the time of the burn.

11. Who has been notified?

CVC has notified all neighbouring property owners, as well as nearby residents in Alton, Town of Caledon staff, Mayors, Councillors, the Dufferin County-Caledon OPP detachment, and Caledon Fire and Emergency Services.

12. Why are grassland habitats important?

It is estimated that only one per cent of the original (pre-settlement) extent of grassland habitat remains in Ontario today. As a result, many of the plants that grow in those habitats are listed as rare or endangered in Canada.

Upper Credit Conservation Area contains approximately 7.5 hectares of created grassland habitat. This site is located within the historical range of grasslands that once covered much of southern Ontario. This habitat type is home to many species at risk such as bobolink and meadowlark and can support many important pollinator species.

13. How do controlled burns help grassland habitats?

Prior to human settlement, wildfires were a natural occurrence and grassland habitats evolved to be fire dependent. Controlled burns mimic the process of natural wildfires. They benefit native plants and animals by removing exotic plants and grasses, by restoring wildlife habitat and returning essential nutrients to the soil.

14. What will happen to the wildlife at the site?

Wildlife have adaptive behaviours that help them escape from fire. Mammals, for example, can easily out-run ground fires or retreat to burrows or previously burned areas. Reptiles and amphibians may remain in the soil, retreat beneath logs and damp leaves, enter burrows, or escape to water.

CVC has chosen a window of time when the site will have very low activity in terms of wildlife use. This includes respecting the breeding bird window for this area of the province.

Overall, most animals benefit from the new growth that follows a fire and the open type of habitat it maintains. Some animals such as turkeys and birds of prey will move to recently burned areas to look for food.

15. Who do I contact for more information/questions?

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact CVC's Communications Department at 905-670-1615 ext. 224.