**News Bulletin**
BLM Eastern States State Office

**Media Contact:** Kristen Peters, kpeters@blm.gov, (470) 716-5648

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**BLM plans prescribed burn at Lathrop Bayou**

*Fuels treatment will reduce wildfire threat and improve ecosystem health*

**FALLS CHURCH, Va. –** The Bureau of Land Management plans to conduct a prescribed burn at Lathrop Bayou, located in Bay County, Florida east of Tyndall Air Force Base in East Bay, as weather and fuel conditions allow. The fuels treatment, slated for the week of Feb. 5, 2024, will remove vegetative material that contributes to the severity of potential wildfires and improve the health of fire-adapted habitats for wildlife and people.

In close collaboration with state and federal partners, BLM will apply fire to approximately 561 acres on four islands in Lathrop Bayou as well as on adjacent private lands. The last burn at Lathrop Bayou occurred in 2020, and damage from extreme weather, including hurricanes and tropical storms, has added additional fuels to the area.

Lathrop Bayou’s longleaf and slash pine ecosystem requires fire to be healthy. The fire prescription will reduce ground fuel vegetation (e.g., leaves, pine needles, and logs) and improve habitat conditions for imperiled plants and animals such as the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and several threatened plants, including the Florida skullcap and white-birds-in-a-nest wildflower. The ideal fire regime to maintain a healthy pine ecosystem occurs about every 2-4 years.

Fully trained and experienced prescribed fire applicators from the BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will conduct the burn. The fire will be lit aerially with ground support, containment will be achievable due to presence of surrounding water bodies. Ground and boat crews will also be onsite to monitor the progress of the fire.

Smoke from the prescribed burn may be visible throughout the day of the burn, mostly during the warmest part of the day. With cooler temperatures in the evening, smoke may linger and accumulate in low-lying areas. Firefighters will be on site throughout the day of ignition and may periodically patrol the burn for several days afterward if conditions require.

To help protect public health and safety, the BLM plans to conduct the prescribed burn under wind and weather conditions that minimize smoke and ash impacts to nearby towns and roads. Smoke emissions will be managed in accordance with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulations.

Fire is a natural and an important ecological force in Florida. Prescribed burns help reduce wildfire risk by thinning trees and brush and creating fuel breaks, which lessens wildfire severity and slows fire spread. Fire also helps to create various stages of plant succession, which is critical to the health of fire-adapted ecosystems. Plants and animals benefit as well. Native wildlife is adapted to and depend on periodic fire for survival.

For general information about the burn operation, contact John Norton-Jensen, BLM Eastern States Fuels Program Manager, at jnortonjensen@blm.gov. For media inquiries, contact Kristen Peters, BLM Eastern States Deputy State Director for Communications, at kpeters@blm.gov.

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