October 13, 2021

Dear Neighbor,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing because you live near a county-owned park named Old Colchester Park and Preserve located at 10605 Furnace Road, Lorton, VA 22079.  The Fairfax County Park Authority plans to conduct a controlled burn at Old Colchester Park between December 1 and April 30, 2022, depending on weather conditions.  The purpose of burning is to improve wildlife habitat as part of a long-term plan to protect the natural resources of the park.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and the Virginia Department of Forestry assist with planning and conducting controlled burns. Hundreds of controlled burns occur every year throughout the state of Virginia and thousands throughout the United States.  Fairfax County Park Authority has conducted numerous burns safely and successfully since 1998 with approval from the Park Authority Board.  A burn was conducted at Old Colchester Park in February 2017.

Our safety record is excellent and water pumps and fire suppression equipment will be present, and the local fire station will be ready to assist if necessary.  Burns are only conducted when weather conditions permit safe use of fire and rapid dissipation of smoke (e.g. low wind speed, safe moisture levels, rising air).  Prevailing wind directions are chosen to blow smoke away from neighbors, but you may still smell or see smoke on the day of the burn and flames may be visible from Old Colchester Road.  After the burn, the ground may appear blackened, but plants will survive and will grow rapidly in the spring.

Controlled burns help maintain high quality wildlife habitat.  Burns invigorate plant growth, attract wildlife, and control non-native invasive plants. Prescribed burns are an accepted technique for managing natural resource protection zones on park property.  Natural resource protection zones are identified in Poplar Ford Park’s master plan which can be found online here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/planning-development/masterplan-archives> .  More information about FCPA’s burn program is available at: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/nature/prescribed-burn> .

Please feel free to contact me at [owilli@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:owilli@fairfaxcounty.gov) .  I am frequently in the park and I plan to stop by the neighborhood to speak with neighbors over the next few months.

Sincerely,

Owen Williams

Ecologist III

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