Notice to Park Users

City of Toronto Urban Forestry is planning to undertake a prescribed (or controlled) burn in High Park in early spring 2020.

City staff and burn consultants are monitoring the weather and on-site ground conditions to determine the optimal time window for the prescribed burn. Once ideal weather conditions are achieved and a burn date has been selected, a Media Advisory will be issued to notify the public, a minimum of 24 hours before ignition.

Red shaded areas on the map show the planned burn zones in High Park.

During the implementation of the burn, access will be temporarily restricted in areas near the burn site. Roadways may be temporarily blocked to ensure the safety of park users.

Prescribed burns are part of The City’s long-term management plan to restore and protect Toronto’s rare black oak woodlands and savannahs. A prescribed burn is a deliberately set and carefully controlled fire that burns low to the ground and consumes dried leaves, small twigs and grass stems, but does not harm larger trees.

Prior to European settlement, controlled burns were used by Indigenous Peoples to manage and maintain this fire-dependent ecosystem. Fire-depandant ecosystems like black oak savannahs, contain prairie plants that respond positively to prescribed burning and grow more vigorously than they would in the absence of fire.

Under ideal weather conditions, the smoke from the prescribed burn will rise without impacting the surrounding neighbourhoods. It is possible however that weather conditions could change and smoke from burning vegetation could reach residential areas near the park.

Individuals with asthma and high sensitivity to poison ivy should limit their exposure by staying inside and keeping their windows closed. Some individuals may choose to leave the park during the burn if they are concerned about any potential sensitivity to smoke.

The 2020 prescribed burn will be the 16th burn in High Park. It follows the tremendous success of the black oak woodlands and savannah restoration programs that the City began in 2000 in High Park, and 2002 in South Humber Park and Lambton Park.

For more information about the prescribed burn program and ongoing forest management, please visit www.toronto.ca/urban-forest-management.