



Zion National Park News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Prescribed Fire Planned in Zion National Park

According to Superintendent Jock Whitworth, Zion National Park plans to start ignition of the remaining 500 acres of the 2,300-acre East Mesa Prescribed Fire on **Thursday, May 1, 2008**. The fire may be postponed a few days because of unfavorable weather conditions or lack of firefighting resources. This prescribed fire project is located on the east side of the park, northwest of the Zion Ponderosa Ranch and is a continuation of the project that was initiated in spring 2006 when approximately 1,800 acres were treated.

The project will begin with a blacklining operation along the park boundary, followed by ignition of the interior of the unit. Once the area is ignited, it will actively burn for 1-2 days and then smolder for another 3-5 days. The fire will be closely monitored by park personnel until declared out. The objectives of the East Mesa Prescribed Fire are to reduce the wildland fire hazard along the park boundary, provide protection for surrounding property and structures and restore fire to its natural role in the ecosystem.

Short-term impacts will be possible smoky conditions and the temporary closure of trails in the vicinity of the burn area. Forecasted weather conditions should provide good smoke dispersal, but there is potential for it to settle into the canyons during the night. Stave Spring Trailhead and Echo Canyon (beyond the junction with Observation Point Trail) will be temporarily closed during the burn and reopened only when conditions are safe. The East Rim Trail and Observation Point (from Weeping Rock Trailhead) will remain open for day hiking only.

The goal of the prescribed fire program in Zion is to use management-ignited prescribed fire, where appropriate, for the restoration of fire-dependent ecosystems and species-specific resource management goals. Prescribed fire projects are to be conducted in a manner consistent with land and resource management plans, public health considerations, and approved prescribed fire plans. The park works very closely with other state and federal land management agencies in the planning and management of these fires. The policy of using fire as a tool will help decrease risks to life, property, and resources; prescribed fires will help perpetuate the natural resource values for which Zion National Park was established.

For more information about this or other prescribed fire projects in Zion, call 435-772-3256 or visit our website at <http://www.nps.gov/zion/naturescience/fire-management-homepage.htm>