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JBLM Fire Dispatch Controlled burns on JBLM are necessary

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This summer, you may see columns of smoke over Joint Base Lewis-McChord and wonder if there is something burning that you need to worry about.

No need to worry.

The JBLM Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division conducts prescribed burns for ecological restoration, habitat maintenance and wildfire prevention.

Firefighter and public safety are always the number one priority when conducting prescribed burns.

Fire professionals conduct the burns to maintain the open fire resilient landscapes that are necessary to meet the Joint Base Lewis-McChord training mission and to provide habitat for wildlife including several endangered species.

Controlled burns reduce fuel loadings, which reduces wildfire risks and increases the safety of Soldiers and Airmen conducting training exercises during summer months by decreasing the risk of accidental fires that may result from training activities.

The environmental division works cooperatively with JBLM Fire and Emergency Services and other agencies to conduct the burns and manage the ecological impacts (positive and negative) that fire has on native and non-native species.

Active training on JBLM means that fires will occur with or without prescribed burns. The use of prescribed burns allows firefighters to decide when and where a fire will happen, allowing them to take advantage of favorable conditions, reducing risks to themselves and the public.

These burns are conducted throughout the spring and summer to ensure invasive species, such as Scot's Broom, are dry and burn better-making the fire a more effective way to destroy this invasive plant. A dry fire produces less smoke reducing the risk that smoke will drift into populated areas.

Native Americans conducted ecological burns until the late 1800s. Without these prescribed burns, most, if not all, of the prairies would have been encroached upon by Douglas fir forest long before Europeans reached Washington state. JBLM resumed the practice in the late 1970s.

When you see smoke from the JBLM's from controlled fires, it is a good thing. It's working toward the triple bottom line of sustainability — Mission, Community and Environment.

JBLM prescribed burn schedule is posted on the Sustainable JBLM Facebook page — facebook.com/SustainableJBLM. Residents can report nuisance smoke by calling the JBLM Fire Dispatch office at 253-912-2049.

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