

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn Urges Caution to Prevent Wildfires

Harrisburg, PA - With the approach of spring, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn noted drying spring winds and warming temperatures quickly can combine to increase fire dangers across Pennsylvania's forests and brush lands.

"Despite recent wet weather and snow predicted this weekend in much of the state, recent, highly visible fires around the Harrisburg area showed us it just takes a few days of sun and wind to allow brush and forest fire danger to develop," Dunn said. "Most of the reported fires last year are linked to people; people cause 98 percent of wildfires. A mere spark by a careless person can touch off a devastating forest blaze during dry periods when conditions enable wildfires to spread quickly."

"Common sense can limit the threat of wildfires," said Dunn. "When state residents and forest visitors are careless with burning trash, campfires and smoking, volunteer firefighters often pay the price, answering call after call in spring woodlands that are ripe for damaging, life-threatening wildfires."

DCNR statistics show nearly 85 percent of Pennsylvania's wildfires occur in March, April and May, before the greening of state woodlands and brushy areas. Named for rapid spread through dormant, dry vegetation, under windy conditions, wildfires annually scorch nearly 7,000 acres of state and private woodlands.

In 2015, Bureau of Forestry personnel and volunteer firefighters battled a total of 817 reported field, brush and forest fires that scorched 4,165 acres across the state.

Anglers, campers and other state forest visitors are reminded open fires are prohibited on state forestland from March 1 to May 25, and when the fire danger is listed as high, very high, or extreme, unless authorized by district foresters.

Communities in heavily wooded areas are urged to follow wildfire prevention and suppression methods of the Pennsylvania Firewise Community Program to safeguard life and property.

DCNR's Bureau of Forestry is responsible for prevention and suppression of wildfires on the 17 million acres of state and private woodlands and brush lands. The bureau maintains a fire-detection system, and works with fire wardens and volunteer fire departments to ensure they are trained in the latest advances in fire prevention and suppression.

For more information on Wildfire Prevention Week activities, contact local district foresters; call the Bureau of Forestry at (717) 787-2925; or visit www.dcnr.pa.gov (select "Forestry" then "Wildland Fire").

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Governor Tom Wolf has proclaimed March 20-26 Wildfire Prevention Week in Pennsylvania

PENNSYLVANIA WILDFIRE PREVENTION WEEK
March 20-26, 2016

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's bountiful woodlands and brush lands enrich the lives of both residents and visitors alike on a daily basis, providing irreplaceable habitat for countless flora and fauna species, a sustainable resource of timber and clean water, scenic recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, though both are sustainable resources, woodlands and brush lands quickly can be devastated by acts of carelessness. People are responsible for 98 percent of all wildfires, nearly 85 percent of which occur in March, April, and May prior to greening of our woodlands and brush lands; and

WHEREAS, wildfires annually devastate nearly 7,000 acres of state forest and even more private land; and threaten life, property, and the sustainability of our valuable natural resources; and

WHEREAS, wildfire prevention hinges heavily on public understanding and appreciation of these values. Precautions and vigilance must be everyone's personal charge, so that we can continue enjoying Pennsylvania's millions of acres of woodlands and brush lands, now and into the future. Communities in heavily wooded areas are urged to follow wildfire prevention and suppression methods of the Pennsylvania Firewise Community Program to safeguard life and property; and

WHEREAS, these commonsense guidelines aid the brave men and women who serve as volunteer forest firefighters of our community volunteer fire companies and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

THEREFORE, in recognition of the importance of protecting our woodlands, brush lands, life, property, and our natural resources, I, Tom Wolf, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim March 20-26, 2016, as WILDFIRE PREVENTION WEEK in Pennsylvania. I urge all Pennsylvanians and visitors to protect our valuable woodlands and brush lands by being meticulously cautious with the use of fire.