



NEWS RELEASE

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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND PARTNERS CONTINUE TO FIGHT WILDFIRES

Changing weather conditions may advance fire spread

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) continues to battle several wildfires in central and southwest Virginia. The largest fire remains in Madison County (Quaker Run Road) with several fires confirmed in the western region of the state.

A cold front is expected to move through Virginia today that will likely bring rapidly changing conditions and the potential for fire spread. Near drought conditions, low humidity, high winds and warm temperatures all combine to produce conditions favorable for the spread of existing fires and the start of new ones. Friday, conditions are expected to improve with additional cloud cover and higher humidity. However, very little rain is in the forecast for the near future.

Earlier this week, Governor Glenn Youngkin declared a State of Emergency in Virginia, which ensures DOF has access to all necessary resources to ensure containment of the fire. DOF continues to work closely with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Virginia National Guard (VNG), National Park Service, USDA Forest Service, local fire and emergency services, and law enforcement. Although Virginia is experiencing a typical fire season, extreme drought conditions and large quantity of fuel on the ground (dry grasses, leaves, tree debris) continue to feed the fire. The treacherous terrain in the area also complicates response efforts. The public is urged to delay all outdoor burning. Several counties have declared burning bans. Check with officials in your area for the latest updates.

Quaker Run and Western Fires

In total more than 200 personnel are currently responding to the Quaker Run fire. The fire is now 3,700 acres, with 40% containment. VNG helicopter crews continue to drop water to cool the fire and slow progress. Crews will perform an additional firing operations and helicopter runs today, if conditions allow. In the western region, DOF is currently working on 22 additional fires covering a combined area of 4,400 acres. “Contained” means that the wildfire is limited to a certain area and likely won’t spread, and “controlled” means that firefighters have completely extinguished the fire.

“We are receiving questions from the public on how they can help,” said Chief of Fire and Emergency Response John Miller. “You can help firefighters by delaying all outdoor burning until conditions improve. With Virginia’s extremely dry weather, the situation is very dangerous for wildfires to spark and spread right now. And as always, if you see a fire in your area, call 911 immediately.”

George Washington & Jefferson National Forest Fire Restrictions

In addition, the USDA Forest Service is implementing a Stage 1 fire restriction on the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest to maintain public safety and protect forest resources during drought. Visitors igniting and maintaining campfires within developed recreation sites should use caution and make sure that all campfires are fully extinguished before leaving their site. Campfires should not be left unattended. For more information on the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest, visit www.fs.usda.gov/gwj

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About the Virginia Department of Forestry

The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. With nearly 16 million acres of forestland and more than 108,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide an overall economic output of more than \$23 billion annually. Headquartered in Charlottesville, the agency has forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide citizen service and public safety protection across the Commonwealth, which it's been doing now for more than 100 years. DOF is an equal opportunity provider.