

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD, AND FORESTRY**

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard

Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 6, 2017

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Suzanne McCombs, 405-421-3071, Suzanne.mccombs@ag.ok.gov

Wildfire danger persists across the state

Oklahomans are being urged to remain vigilant in their fire prevention efforts as fire season is in full swing across the state. Dry conditions and high winds have created dangerous fire conditions that on some days become critical to extreme. Oklahoma Forestry Services (OFS) has worked alongside local fire departments to suppress multiple wildfires over the past few weeks and anticipates continued fire danger this week. Oklahoma is leading the nation in the number of large wildfires so far this year and responded to 75 fires that burned 9,737 acres just this past weekend.

“We are in a situation that can quickly become dangerous for the public and even firefighters due to the extreme fire weather conditions that can rapidly develop this time of the year,” said George Geissler, director, Oklahoma Forestry Services. “As we continue to see normal firefighting tactics proving less effective and more time consuming we ask that everyone be aware of these conditions and use extreme caution with anything that can spark a fire.”

Oklahoma Forestry Services, working with the National Weather Service, Southern Area Coordination Center and with input from interagency and local fire resources, monitors fire conditions daily for the state and informs the firefighting community with its Fire Situation Report, which is available on its website.

Additionally, the agency prepares for heightened fire danger conditions by pre-positioning its firefighting crews in high risk areas of the state to work with local fire departments. Additionally, OFS and Oklahoma Emergency Management (OEM) coordinate with the Oklahoma National Guard placing helicopters on standby and to bring in additional resources from out of state as necessary.

Due to current conditions, Oklahoma Forestry Services is urging firefighters and the public to prepare for the possibility of an increase in the number and severity of wildfires. The public is asked to use fire prevention tactics such as heeding burn bans, avoiding any activities that can spark a blaze, not allowing chains to drag from vehicles and not parking on dry grass.

Additionally the public is asked to report any wildfires immediately through 911, avoid the vicinity of wildfires to allow firefighters faster access to fires and to heed all evacuation notices. Families are advised to have a plan for wildfire incidents. Homeowners can also make their home more defensible by moving trash, debris and other flammable items like firewood piles or portable propane tanks a safe distance away from their home.

Oklahoma Forestry Services is the state’s lead agency related to wildland fire prevention and protection. For additional information about wildfires, visit www.forestry.ok.gov/wildfire-information.

Note to Media: For the latest Oklahoma “Daily Wildfire Situation Report” visit www.forestry.ok.gov and click the link on the homepage (green box on right hand side.) The report contains information about recent fire activity, predicted fire weather and a link for current burn bans.

About Oklahoma Forestry Services

Oklahoma Forestry Services, a division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, is committed to conserving, enhancing and protecting Oklahoma’s 12.5 million acres of forests and woodlands. Since 1925, Oklahoma Forestry Services has worked with individuals and communities throughout the state to create resilient landscapes, fire-adaptive communities and provide wildfire response. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the division also has regional offices in Broken Bow, Wilburton and Tahlequah. For more information, visit <http://www.forestry.ok.gov>.