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Arkansas Agriculture Department Honors Forestry Commission Personnel and Joins U. S. Forest Service in Presenting Bronze Smokey Bear Award

STATEWIDE, ARK. – The Arkansas Agriculture Department’s Forestry Commission (AFC) honored personnel on Thursday at its biennial Agency Day for their accomplishments in managing and protecting Arkansas forests and residents. The awards included a special presentation of a national Bronze Smokey Bear award, Employee of the Year awards, employee Service Awards, and a Partnership Award.

Rusty Cowart of Garland County received the Bronze Smokey Bear Award, the highest honor awarded by the U. S. Forest Service for outstanding work and program impact in wildfire prevention, for his creation of the [Arkansas Jr. Wildland Firefighter Guide](#). The award was presented by U.S. Forest Service Ouachita National Forest Supervisor Norman Wagoner, State Forester Joe Fox, and Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward. “Bronze Smokey Bear awards are given to organizations or individuals that have provided outstanding service with significant impact within a state. Only ten of these are awarded nationally each year, and we are honored to present a Smokey Bear Award here in Arkansas,” said Wagoner.

“We are proud that Rusty’s initiative and hard work with the Arkansas Jr. Wildland Firefighters Guide was recognized by the U. S. Forest Service for the significant impact it has in educating Arkansans about wildfire prevention and prescribed fire”, said Joe Fox.

Dennis Spear of Washington County was the 2017 recipient of the Spencer Fox Award, the highest honor awarded by the AFC. “For decades, Dennis Spear has been an excellent asset to the Arkansas Forestry Commission, going above and beyond his assigned duties to fulfill our mission at a county, state, and national level,” said Joe Fox. “Dennis leads partnership and training efforts with partner organizations and is respected by colleagues across Arkansas. He is greatly loved by his crew and is a remarkable mentor to wildland firefighters at the AFC and partner agencies.”

Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward presented Employee Service Awards to 21 employees with 10, 20 or 30 years of service. “The service milestones achieved by these individuals demonstrate their dedication, hard work, and commitment as public servants to the State of Arkansas, the Arkansas Agriculture Department, and Arkansas’s broad and diverse agriculture industry,” said Wes Ward.

The Ross Foundation & Horizon Timber Services were awarded the AFC’s annual Partnership Award for their work with local AFC and conservation crews to manage thousands of acres of forestland in Clark and Hot Spring Counties and surrounding areas. They have also hosted landowner workshops to promote healthy forest practices to all Arkansans.

Find all 2017 AFC Agency Awards, [here](#). Find all AFC 2017-2018 Service Awards, [here](#).

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit www.agriculture.arkansas.gov

