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Arkansas Partners Train 250 Firefighters at River Valley Wildland Fire Academy

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. – 250 firefighter trainees from seven states participated in the 2018 Arkansas River Valley Fire Academy at Arkansas Tech University to gain valuable wildland fire training from experienced professionals. The annual two-week event is hosted by the Arkansas Agriculture Department's Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC), U. S. Forest Service, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and the National Park Service to teach an array of wildland firefighting skills.

"Arkansas is fortunate to have strong relationships between our state, federal, and private partners. This jointly sponsored academy allows our wildland firefighters to share and gain knowledge and experience in an informal setting so we can respond safely, quickly and effectively when emergencies happen," says Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward.

Instructors from the AFC and its partners in wildfire suppression, prescribed fire, and conservation combine hands-on exercises and classroom material to teach basic fire suppression, advanced suppression strategy and tactics, engine operation, dozer operation, Incident Command procedures, and more. All courses are accredited by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. Completion of training allows firefighters to gain required skills for wildland firefighting positions in Arkansas, and those required to assist on out-of-state wildfire incidents.

"Classroom instruction and field exercises offered at the River Valley Fire Academy help all participants gain knowledge and hands-on training from experienced instructors," says State Forester Joe Fox. "This training is critical to the safety of our employees and Arkansas residents, and to the successful accomplishment of a main part of the AFC's mission to suppress wildfires."

Attendees included participants from the following federal, state, and private entities: AFC, U.S. Forest Service, Arkansas Game & Fish Commission, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Corps of Engineers, Arkansas State Parks, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Oklahoma Forest Service, Choleta of Oklahoma, and several Arkansas municipal fire departments.

Planning is underway for the 2019 River Valley Wildland Fire Academy that will continue to offer classes specific to the needs of Arkansas wildland firefighters, a well-rounded agenda of diverse NWCG courses, and professional instructors that meet standards of excellence in training. Enrollment for the 2019 academy will open in early spring of next year.

The AAD 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

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