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Twelve Days of Arkansas Agriculture: Firewise Program Mitigates Wildfire Danger

LITTLE ROCK, AR – Arkansas has recently experienced higher wildfire frequency with November setting a record for the most fires in that month since November of 1989. The Arkansas Agriculture Department’s Forestry Commission administers the Arkansas Firewise program, an effort dedicated to helping protect Arkansas communities from wildfires through education, planning, and projects.

Arkansas leads the nation with 175 recognized Firewise communities. To be recognized, fire departments must complete several requirements which include assessing 80% of homes in the fire district for wildfire-related risks, holding annual wildfire mitigation (also known as fuel reduction) projects in civic areas or at private homes, conducting wildfire safety education at community events, and developing a Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan. Upon completion of all requirements, fire departments are eligible for Firewise grant funds that can be used toward the purchase of additional wildfire gear and equipment.

Simple steps like cleaning roof gutters, clearing leaves and brush away from homes and buildings, and removing overhanging branches creates defensible space around structures, and can make a big difference in defending homes from wildfires. “Fire departments are our primary partners in suppressing wildfires and providing wildfire safety information and resources. We are pleased to provide grant funds through the Firewise program to help fire departments have the resources they need to serve our communities” says Firewise Program Manager Travis Haile.

Parks and other civic areas can also participate in the Firewise program. The [Crater of Diamonds State Park](#) in Murfreesboro has completed Firewise program requirements for ten years. Besides the 37 acres dedicated to diamond mining, the park is also home to ten homes and various park buildings that benefit from the program. Park officials use program guidelines to create defensible space around park structures at annual clean-up events that involve all staff members.

The Arkansas Firewise program is part of the national [Firewise USA](#) program coordinated by the National Fire Protection Association. Participating entities are recognized at the state and national level for completing program requirements. See all active Arkansas Firewise communities, [here](#). With questions about requirements or grant funds, contact Leslie.Foster@arkansas.gov or Travis.Haile@arkansas.gov, or find online information, [here](#).

This release is the sixth edition to the Twelve Days of Arkansas Agriculture campaign, which highlights some of the programs and services provided by the AAD that support our state’s agriculture industry. Follow each of the 12 stories by searching the #12DaysofARagriculture hashtag, or visit aad.arkansas.gov. 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.

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