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**Contact:** Adriane Barnes, (501) 516-6255, [adriane.barnes@arkansas.gov](mailto:adriane.barnes@arkansas.gov)

### **Arkansas Partners Host River Valley Wildland Fire Academy at Arkansas Tech University**

**LITTLE ROCK, ARK.** – Annually, the Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC) partners with the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and other federal and state partners in wildfire suppression, prescribed fire, and conservation to offer a two-week River Valley Wildland Fire Academy. Instructors from the AFC and partner agencies combine hands-on exercises and classroom material for courses accredited by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). Completion of training allows firefighters to gain required skills for positions in Arkansas, and those required to assist in out-of-state wildfire incidents.

In all, 228 students from 9 different states participated from 13 federal, state, and private agencies including: Arkansas Forestry Commission, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Arkansas Game & Fish Commission, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Arkansas State Parks, National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, Choleta of Oklahoma, and others. Eighteen different NWCG courses were offered.

“Training is one of the most important things we do at the AFC because it is directly tied to the safety of our employees and citizens, and the fulfillment of our mission. Arkansas Tech University and our great partners in planning, hosting, and instructing make this annual event a big success for Arkansas. The point of the River Valley Wildland Fire Academy is to qualify our outstanding men and women to protect Arkansas and assist in protecting other states,” says State Forester Joe Fox.

NWCG courses offered focus on an array of firefighting skills including basic suppression, engine operations, dozer operations, fire weather, suppression strategy and tactics, Incident Command procedures, and more. Planning has already begun for the 2018 academy in hopes of offering classes specific to the needs of Arkansas firefighters, a well-rounded agenda of diverse NWCG courses, and classes and instructors that continue to meet standards of excellence in training.

The mission of the AFC is to protect Arkansas’s forests, and those who enjoy them, from wildland fire and natural hazards while promoting rural and urban forest health, stewardship, development, and conservation for all generations of Arkansans. The AFC is a part of the Arkansas Agriculture Department.

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