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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 7/14/2022

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Arkansas Department of Agriculture Increases Wildfire Danger Risk Level Designations for all 75 Counties

LITTLE ROCK, AR – With hot, dry conditions throughout the state, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Forestry Division has increased the wildfire danger risk level designations for all 75 counties over the past two weeks. Twelve counties in Northwest Arkansas were raised to the “high” risk level, and the remaining counties were rated as being at a “moderate” risk for wildfire danger. Additionally, 53 counties have been placed under a burn ban by local county judges.

“These 90 to 100 degree days with little or no rain have led to extremely dry conditions across the entire state,” said State Forester Joe Fox. “We are seeing an increase in the number of wildfires and their intensity, and that’s a trend that will continue until we see significant rainfall statewide.”

The Forestry Division maintains a county-by-county Wildfire Danger map with four risk levels: low, moderate, high, and extreme. Risk levels are determined by drought status and long-term weather forecasts and are defined by how easily fires can start and how hard they are to contain. The Wildfire Danger map can be found at bit.ly/ARWildFireRisk. The risk level definitions are:

- **Low:** Fuels do not ignite easily. Weather conditions will lead to slow, easy to control fires.
- **Moderate:** Fire can start from accidental causes. May not become serious, but caution should be taken.
- **High:** Fires ignite easily and spread quickly. Unattended brush fires and campfires are likely to escape. Fires may become serious if not attacked early.
- **Extreme:** Fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely. Every fire started has the potential to become large. Expect extreme, erratic behavior.

In addition to heightened risk levels, 53 Arkansas counties have been placed under a burn ban by local county judges. Burn bans primarily prohibit activities that involve an open flame. This includes fireworks, campfires, trash burning, open flame grilling, and prescribed or controlled burns.

Robert Murphy, Director of Emergency Services for the Forestry Division, recommends taking additional precautions when driving or operating machinery.

“It’s important to remain cautious when driving through or working in dry grass,” Murphy said. “Trucks, ATVs, hay balers, and other vehicles can easily start fires by causing sparks over dry grass.”

The Forestry Division is asking those who see fires to report them by calling 1-800-468-8834 and to avoid flying drones in the area. When drones are present, those fighting the fires are unable to perform detection flights or fly single engine airtankers (SEATs) to drop water.

Find a county burn ban map at bit.ly/ARBurnBan. To learn more about burn bans in your county, find your local official’s contact information at arcounties.org/counties/.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture 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.