



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DCNR's Bureau of Forestry Announces Reward Increase as Probe Continues Into Wildfires That Consumed More Than 8,000 Acres

Harrisburg, PA – The state Bureau of Forestry today announced an increase in the reward offered in its ongoing investigation of arson earlier this spring that scorched more than 8,000 acres of woodlands on the Monroe-Pike county line.

A reward totaling \$15,000 now is being offered by the bureau for information leading to arrests and convictions in what investigators say were two fires intentionally set. Labeled the 16 Mile and Beartown fires, the wildfires were discovered April 20 and burned through May 2 in Delaware State Forest.

"A private landowner affected by the 16 Mile Fire is increasing his reward to \$10,000, adding \$5,000 to his already offered reward," said Michael Kern, chief of the bureau's Division of Forest Fire Protection Section. "Coupled with DCNR's standing reward offer of \$5,000, we're hoping this increased anonymous donation will spur some new leads in our investigation."

"Circumstances in both fires led us to an early conclusion that they were the result of arson," Kern said. "Spanning almost two weeks and burning across about 8,700 acres, these fires put lives and property at major risk, which is of great concern to us."

Cost has been set at \$2 million for the wildfires in which more than 100 bureau personnel rotated in and out of fire scenes. They were assisted by federal, state and local emergency and other personnel, as well as a Smokey Bear Hotshot firefighting team from New Mexico.

"Intentionally setting a wildfire is arson and we take that very seriously. We are asking anyone who may have information to come forward," Kern said. "Any information offered on anyone or anything suspicious observed in that area will be treated with utmost importance and strictest confidence."

Information that could lead to the reward can be forwarded to bureau Special Investigator Terry Smith, 717-362-1472; terrsmit@pa.gov; or by calling 570-895-4000. Anonymous tips also will be accepted but do not qualify for the reward.

A Delaware State Forest cabin colony was evacuated and multiple state forest roads were closed during the fires, which burned two leased cabins, three seasonal homes and six outbuildings. One firefighter received a minor injury.

Fighting the fire was complicated by rugged terrain, windy, dry weather and dead trees left by gypsy moth infestations.

DCNR's Bureau of Forestry is responsible for protecting Pennsylvania's 17 million acres of public and private woodlands from damage by wildfire.

For more information on wildfire prevention, visit www.dcnr.pa.gov (select "Forestry" under "Quick Links" then "Wildland Fire").

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