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## **DCNR's Bureau of Forestry Announces Reward Increase As Investigation Continues into Pocono Wildfire**

**Harrisburg, PA** - The state Bureau of Forestry today announced it again is increasing the reward offered in its ongoing investigation of a spring arson case in which more than 8,000 acres of woodlands were scorched on the Monroe-Pike county line.

A reward totaling \$20,000 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.

"In June, a private landowner affected by the 16 Mile Fire increased 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. "With DCNR's Bureau of Forestry now matching that amount, we're hoping a reward totaling \$20,000 will encourage someone to come forward with the lead or leads we need in our ongoing investigation."

"We know both fires resulted from arson," Kern said. "These fires put lives and property at major risk while spanning almost two weeks and burning across about 8,700 acres."

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; [terrsmith@pa.gov](mailto:terrsmith@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 suffered 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](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov) (select "Forestry" under "Quick Links" then "Wildland Fire").

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