



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
COMMISSIONER ADAM H. PUTNAM

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FFS eyes dry conditions, urges caution

Milton, FL – After 11 wildfires over the past five days, officials with Florida Forest Service’s Blackwater Forestry Center are recommending residents of Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa use caution in all outdoor activities until the area receives appreciable rainfall.

Any number of outdoor activities can lead to a wildfire under the right conditions. Poorly maintained equipment can throw sparks and ignite a fire; burning yard debris on dry, windy days is one of the leading causes of wildfires throughout the state and even parking on dead, dry grass cured by recent freezes can be a possible cause.

“There’s no single avenue we’re looking at as far as these fires go,” said David Smith, Operations Administrator for the Center. “There have been multiple causes and as dry as it is right now, there are plenty of reasons to be careful.”

While recent conditions have spurred cause for concern, overall the area is wetter than average for this time of year. Blackwater is currently at a 41 on a scale of 0 to 800 on the Keetch Byram Drought Index with 0 being the wettest and 800 the driest. Normal KBDI ratings for this time of year are between 231 and 390.

“This really just shows that it only takes a few days of dry, sunny weather to go from under water to a serious situation,” Smith said.

Local forecasts call for increased humidity by the weekend and a chance of rain by the start of next week, both of which will be welcomed relief and a step in the right direction for reducing the risk of wildfires.

For more information, contact Joe Zwierzchowski with the Florida Forest Service at (850) 957-6140 ext. 127 or (850) 206-2675.

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