Wildfire Danger Risk Level for all 75 Counties Increased
Arkansas Department of Agriculture - Forestry Division

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. The western half of Arkansas were raised to the "high" risk level, and the remaining counties were rated as being at a "moderate" risk for wildfire danger. Additionally, 67 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.

"These 90 to 100 degree days with little or no rain has 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 state-wide."

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 https://www.ark.org/forestry_fire_info/index.php?do:showWildFires.

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 camp fires 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.

The wildfire and burn ban statistics change daily. Burn ban information can be found at https://www.arkfireinfo.org/index.php?do:showBurn8Bans

A LANDOWNER’S STORY

On Bradley County Road 8 North stands a homemade green sign with four others attached. Each is a little different, but they all tell the story of the Reaves family, which started in the late 1700s.

William Reaves started his thriving plantation in Wayne County, North Carolina, sometime in the latter part of the 18th century. His will, dated October 30, 1790, showed he had ten living children at the time: Adam, John, Jesse, William, Laddy, Stephen, Elizabeth, Peggy, Lovett, and Lee.

One of his children, Lovett, eventually moved his family near the forks of the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers in northern Montgomery County, Alabama. Land transactions between him and other individuals provide a look into what he was doing in the area. He owned several hundred acres, and his children followed suit by purchasing land in the area and adjoining counties.

Eventually, Lovett Reaves, Sr. visited what we now know as Bradley County.

The Associated Press

Monarch Butterflies Now Listed As Endangered

The monarch butterfly fluttered a step closer to extinction last week, as scientists put the iconic orange-and-black insect on the endangered list because of its fast-dwindling numbers.

"It's just a devastating decline," said Stuart Pimm, an ecologist at Duke University who was not involved in the new listing. "This is one of the most recognizable butterflies in the world."

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature added the migrating monarch butterfly for the first time to its "red list" of threatened species and categorized it as "endangered" — two steps from extinct.

The group estimates that the population of monarch butterflies in North America has declined between 22% and 72% over 10 years, depending on the measurement method.

"What we're worried about is the rate of decline," said Nick Haddad, a conservation biologist at Michigan State University. "It's very easy to imagine how very quickly this butterfly could become even more imperiled."

Haddad, who was not directly involved in the listing, estimates that the population of monarch butterflies he studies in the eastern United States has declined between 85% and 95% since the 1990s.

In North America, millions of monarch butterflies undertake the longest migration of any insect species known to science.

After wintering in the mountains of central Mexico, the butterflies migrate to the north, breeding multiple generations along the way for thousands of miles. The offspring that reach southern Canada then begin the trip back to Mexico at the end of summer.

The Tree Farm Program... is administered by the Arkansas Forestry Association (AFA) and its Tree Farm Committee.

AFA's goal is to provide relevant, timely information about the Tree Farm program and forestry resources.

Registration Open for AFA Annual Meeting
A Landowner Story, Oak Dale Tree Farm, con’t.

Arkansas. What he found was fertile, rich land suitable for farming. Wishing to bring his family to this new area, Lovett traveled back to Alabama to prepare. He, unfortunately, died in 1835 before he could see his wish fulfilled.

Despite his passing, Lovett’s widow, Eleanor Jane, also known as “Milley,” along with five of her ten children, Matthew, Joseph, Reuben, Lovett, and Fannie Jane, traveled with other families and settled in the Warren, Arkansas area near the Saline River in 1836.

Lovett Reaves, Jr. carried on his father’s work, buying and selling many acres of land, according to Bradley County Court House records. He and another man established a tanning yard in 1847 as a source of income. Due to the coveted nature of tanned leather, some say this was one of Warren’s first industries.

Lovett would go on to marry Julia Caroline Evans in Bradley County. His family would continue to care for the land their family found so beautiful centuries ago. Many stayed in Bradley County and the surrounding area. Richard Lovett Reaves became a successful farmer in the community, and his son, Larry Reaves, now owns that property.

The Oak Dale Farm was recently recognized as a Century Farm and a Centennial Family Forest, as denoted by two of their four signs. The gold Tree Farm sign shows their commitment to sustainably managing the land as it marks the farm has been certified with the organization for 50 years or more.

The Reaves family story isn’t over just yet. It may have taken over 200 years to get to where they are today, but they plan to keep this forest a family forest for many more years to come.

Monarch Butterfly, con’t.

“It’s a true spectacle and incites such awe,” said Anna Walker, a conservation biologist at New Mexico BioPark Society, who was involved in determining the new listing.

A smaller group spends winters in coastal California, then disperses in spring and summer across several states west of the Rocky Mountains. This population has seen an even more precipitous decline than the eastern monarchs, although there was a small bounce back last winter.

Emma Pelton of the nonprofit Xerces Society, which monitors the western butterflies, said the butterflies are imperiled by loss of habitat and increased use of herbicides and pesticides for agriculture, as well as climate change.

“There are things people can do to help,” she said, including planting milkweed, a plant that the caterpillars depend upon.

Nonmigratory monarch butterflies in Central and South America were not designated as endangered.

The United States has not listed monarch butterflies under the Endangered Species Act, but several environmental groups believe it should be listed.

The international union also announced new estimates for the global population of tigers, which are 40% higher than the most recent estimates from 2015.

The new figures, of between 3,726 and 5,578 wild tigers worldwide, reflect better methods for counting tigers and, potentially, an increase in their overall numbers, said Dale Miquelle, coordinator for the nonprofit Wildlife Conservation Society’s tiger program.

In the past decade, tiger populations have increased in Nepal, northern China and perhaps in India, while tigers have disappeared entirely from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, said Miquelle. They remain designated as endangered.