

# Drought Creates Conditions For Devastating Wildfires

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Widespread drought in Pennsylvania — combined with the annual shower of colored leaves and twigs — are making forests particularly flammable this fall.

The wildfires flaring up across the state — although unfortunate — serve to illustrate the important role “prescribed burning” can play in forest management, said a forest ecologist in Penn State’s College of Agricultural Sciences.

“For thousands of years, fire played a normal — and beneficial — role in forests in the eastern United States,” said Marc Abrams, professor of forest ecology and physiology. “Fires moved through the understory of oak

and pine forests every five to 10 years, burning up excess fuel, eliminating weedy species, and helping to create the healthy forests we have had historically.

“But as a result of fire suppression practices started in the early 1900s, fuels have built up to unnaturally high levels,” he said. “Today’s fires are hotter and more destructive — and they’re killing more trees. The lack of regular fire also is having a profound impact on forest composition. In particular, we have seen a dramatic increase in red maple, birch, and cherry.”

Abrams supports the use of “prescribed burning,” in which experienced foresters start, control, and end fires as a forest management tool. “Historically,

American Indians used fire to encourage the growth of trees that produce food for wildlife,” he said. “Fires also started naturally, from lightning strikes.”

A 2,700-acre wildfire burned recently near Pine Creek in Lycoming County. Two others — one covering 300 acres and another consuming 350 acres — erupted in the Moshannon State Forest, as did one in the Michaux State Forest and one in a forested area north of Harrisburg.

The fires aren’t limited to Pennsylvania. The drought has been blamed for the worst outbreak of forest fires in the Appalachians in a decade, including 150,000-acre burns in Kentucky and the Smoky Mountains.

Pennsylvania’s Department of

Conservation and Natural Resources, Game Commission, and Fish and Boat Commission all banned open fire on their lands, and recommend extreme caution. The Game Commission also issued a smoking ban.

“Western forest fires get most of the press since they’re more flammable and catastrophic,” Abrams said. “Predominantly evergreen, western forests tend to burn as ‘crown fires,’ or ‘stand-replacing fires.’ To some extent, it’s expected out there that fire will burn through the crown, kill the existing trees, and allow a new forest to develop.

“Our situation in the East is different. Most of our deciduous forests historically burned as low-intensity, understory fires. These fires kept the forest in an ‘oak

and pine successional phase’ by eliminating competing species, reducing litter, and exposing the mineral soil. This stimulated acorns to germinate and grow in the understory.”

Because fuel loading has grown quite high, Abrams explains that we may get mixed results in the beginning from prescribed burning. We may get the desired effects in some stands, but others may burn too hot — until an equilibrium gets established.

“In the East, we must learn to think about the beneficial effects of using fire in our ecosystem management practices,” he said. “If we don’t, we can anticipate a large decline in oak and pine populations from the present levels.”

## EMI Elects Gary MacDonald As New Chairman

CHICAGO, Ill. — Gary MacDonald, executive vice president of MacDon Industries, Inc., was elected chairman of the Equipment Manufacturers Institute (EMI) during its 108th annual convention, Oct. 13-15, at the Marriott Desert Springs Resort in Palm Desert, Calif.

MacDonald’s one-year term as chairman officially began Nov. 1.

On Jan. 1, 2002, MacDonald is slated to become co-chairman of the planned consolidation of EMI and Construction Industry Manufacturers Association (CIMA) organization into the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM).

MacDonald has served on the EMI board of directors since 1997 and is a former chairman of the Canadian Farm and Industrial Equipment Institute. As an active member of EMI, he has served as EMI’s vice chairman and second vice chairman.

MacDonald has also served as a division chairman for Sport at the 1999 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, and is a long-time member of the City of Winnipeg Police Pipe Band.

Since 1976, MacDonald has worked for his family-owned business, which manufactures grain and hay harvesting equipment. Headquartered in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, MacDon also has offices in Kansas City, Missouri and Melbourne, Australia.

Nov. 1 also marked the transition date for the scheduled change of other EMI officers and directors. Joining MacDonald as newly elected EMI officers are: David Woods, chief operating officer, Charles Machine Works, Inc., Perry, Okla., as vice chairman and Dennis Eagan, president, Industrial and Power Equipment, Blount, Inc., Zebulon, N.C., as second vice chairman.

Appointed to serve as vice chairman — agriculture was Al Rider, vice president, NA New Holland Ag Business, CNH, New Holland, Pa. Chuck Hoge, president, Bobcat Company, West Fargo, N.D., was also appointed to serve as vice chairman — construction.

Stuart MacKay, president of MacKay and Company, Lombard, Ill., was elected as new EMI supplier council president and will be the supplier council representative to the EMI board of directors.

Several new directors were also elected to serve on the EMI

board. They include: Dirk Hejnal, president and CEO, Westfalia-Surge Inc., Naperville, Ill.; and Roger Eve, chairman and CEO, American Augers Inc., West Salem, Ohio.

Additional members of the board include: Serge Bosche, president, K-D Manitou, Waco, Texas; William Desmond, vice president, distribution/planning, Komatsu America International Co., Vernon Hills, Ill.; John Fitzgerald, vice president, Ingersoll-Rand Company, Shippensburg, Pa.; Charlie Foster, president, Farmers Factory Company, Lee, Ill.; Rusty Fowler, CEO, KMN Modern Farm Equipment, West Memphis, Ark.; William Gehl, chairman, president and CEO, Gehl Company, West Bend, Wis.; Phil Jenkins, chairman, Sweeper, Inc., Dexter, Miss.; Robert Kluver, president and CEO, Angus-Palm Industries, Inc., Watertown, S.D.; Bill Lasky, president, JLG Industries, Inc., McConnellsburg, Pa.; Ray Mali-

nowski, executive vice president, Leon-Ram Enterprises, Inc., Yorkton, SK, Canada; Ed Malzahn, president and CEO, Charles Machine Works, Inc., Perry, Okla.; Bobby Middlebrooks, president, Bush Hog, Selma, Ala.; Tim O’Malley, vice president, construction sales, Daewoo Heavy Industries America Corporation, Suwanee, Ga.; Barry Phillips, president, Gradall Company, New Philadelphia, Ohio; Andreas Pielczyk, president, Liebherr Mining, Newport News, Va.; Robert Ratliff, chairman and CEO, Agco Corporation, Duluth, Ga.; Fred Ridenour, general manager, distribution and credit, Kobelco America Inc., Stafford, Texas; Jay Roszell, president, Volvo Construction Equipment North America, Asheville, N.C.; Charles Stamp, president, World Wide Ag Division, Global Ag Services, Deere and Company, Atlanta, Ga.; and Van Walbridge, president, Mobile Tool International, Westminster, Colo.

## USDA To Measure Pennsylvania Cattle Inventory

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — In January 2001, the total number of cattle and calves in Pennsylvania was estimated at 1,640,000 head. This was a decline of 10,000 head from January 2000.

There were 150,000 head of beef cows for 2001, again down from the previous year by 1,000 head, and 610,000 head of milk cows, down 9,000 head from January 2000. Pennsylvania’s 2000 calf crop also moved down 10,000 head to 670,000 from its 1999 level.

USDA’s January Cattle Report Survey is the only chance to officially measure the entire Cattle industry in Pennsylvania and the U.S. in 2002. Approximately 1,700 cattle producers will be contacted for the state of Pennsylvania and 50,000 operators for the U.S.

In mid to late December, Pennsylvania cattle operations will receive questionnaires in the mail and in late December and early January, respondents will be contacted by an enumerator either by telephone or personal interview.

As with all surveys conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), by federal law, your survey data is kept confidential. Names, addresses, and information about individual operations are considered private information and are exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Data on individual operations cannot be released to the public or to any other local, state, or national government agency under any circumstances.

National survey results will be released from Washington, D.C. at 3 p.m. on Feb. 1. All reports are available on the Internet within minutes of the scheduled release time at [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/).

The Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service is a field office of USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service. It is located in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture building in Harrisburg. The office can be reached at 1-800-498-1518 or through e-mail at [nass-pa@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass-pa@nass.usda.gov).

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