

Massachusetts Wildfire Activity Briefing

November 27, 2024, as of 17:00

Massachusetts DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry FINAL ACTIVITY BRIEFING pending a return to significant activity

SYNOPSIS:

The recent transition to a more seasonal weather pattern bringing much needed and more frequent precipitation followed by more seasonable temperatures has significantly lowered fire activity across the entire region. A more significant system over the holiday will produce more rain followed by colder than average temperatures. This pattern change has produced the typical season ending event needed to get the region out of this historic fall fire season. Precipitation amounts recorded over the last week have not been a “drought buster”, however the duration of these systems have allowed surface fuels to absorb moisture, which significantly lowers ignition potential. The change in weather gave firefighters the edge to strengthen all perimeters around ongoing large fires and consider them 100% contained, meaning there is little chance of escape, thus eliminating threats to adjacent communities.

Large fire incidents could see continued scattered areas smolder in deep burning hot spots, large fuels, and smoldering stumps. These smoldering fuels will be no threat to escape or the public, and results in a beneficial natural fire effect in these ecosystems.

SUMMARY:

This historical fall wildfire season began to set up in late August, as the wetter than average summer weather pattern transitioned to abnormally dry conditions into the beginning of September. Drought indices quickly began to climb through September with very little rainfall through the month, which in turn set up October for potential increased fire activity. October followed suit with very little rainfall, rapidly drying fuels conditions, and continuous days with above average temperatures, low humidity, and intermittent wind events. Adding to the fire problem was the seasonal leaf drop which caused increasing challenges for firefighters to maintain containment as fresh leaf drop added fuel daily across all fires. November did not bring any relief, and in fact saw fuel moistures continue to drop, and fire weather conditions deteriorate daily forcing several red flag warnings as increasing wind events produced dangerous and extreme fire behavior in most areas. Alignment of fire weather conditions, fuel conditions and topography provided the recipe for large fire growth on a number of new fire starts with increasing challenges for fire crews to establish control lines to stop fire growth. In total there were 662 wildfires for 4,000 acres burned between October 1 and November 27, 2024.

IGNITION CAUSE:

Given the fact there was no thunderstorm development to produce lightning throughout October and November, it is safe to call all wildfires during this period human caused in some form. Most are deemed accidental in nature. Some were equipment related, and there were several fires caused by downed powerlines. Many causes were traced back to outdoor burning and abandoned campfires. The weather pattern produced some of the best opportunities for outdoor recreation this fall meaning increased probability of human caused ignitions. Fuel conditions by the beginning of November were such that any campfire left abandoned was most likely going to escape. In many cases embers from outdoor burning and sparks from equipment, such as lawnmowers, were documented as causing wildfires that spread quickly. These indices supported by the increasing fire occurrence activity prompted DCR Officials to issue a statewide campfire ban in all state parks and forest. This was followed by almost 200 communities issuing outright burn bans within their jurisdictions.

THREATS TO STRUCTURES:

As fire behavior and activity increased, so did the threat to values at risk in residential structures and outbuildings. Fire behavior producing rapid rates of spread in volatile fuels increased risk to structures, as challenges to bring fires under control in the initial attack increased. Per the current fire reporting for this data set:

October 1 through November 27th, as collected in the reporting system to date:

Residential Homes Threatened: 374
Residential Homes Destroyed or Damaged: 4
Outbuildings and other structures Threatened: 101
Outbuildings and other structures Destroyed: 27

CURRENT WILDFIRE STATISTICS:

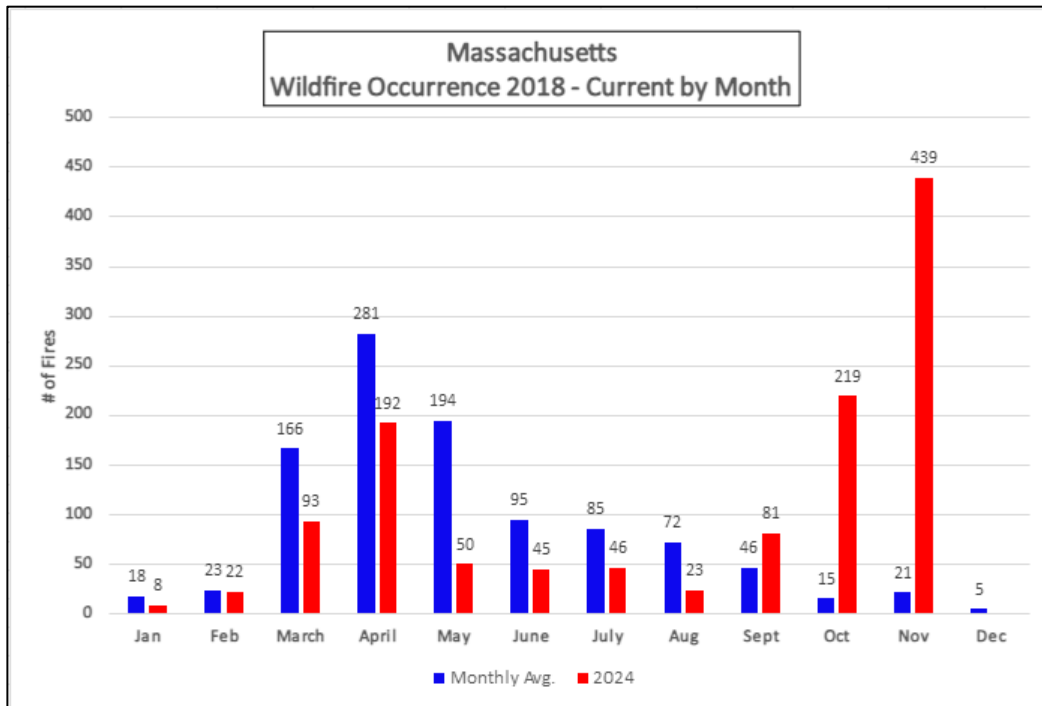
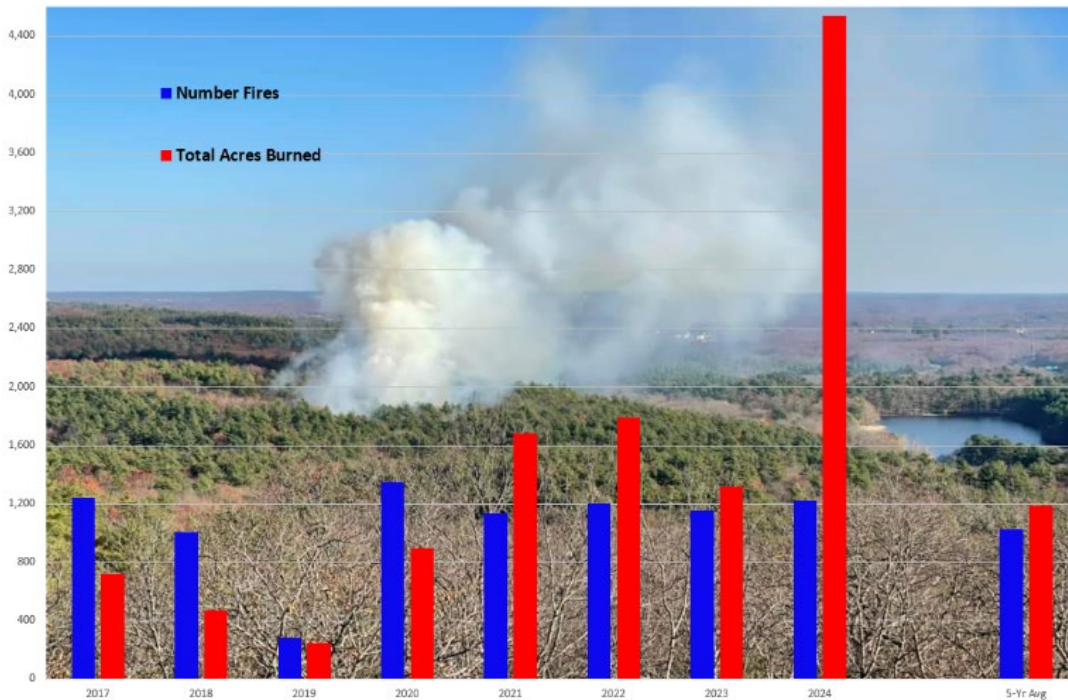
YTD STATE TOTALS:	1,250	4,557	ACRES BURNED
OCTOBER TOTALS:	223	843	ACRES BURNED
NOVEMBER TOTALS:	439	3,157	ACRES BURNED

Ongoing active fire incidents- Extended Operations

All fire behavior has been reduced to smoldering while fuels remain damp over the next day or so.

- **Butternut: Great Barrington:** 1,670 acres at 90% containment. Increase in acreage as crews begin to get more detailed mapping in some of the more rugged and difficult access areas. Very scattered smoldering interior of the perimeter. Will continue patrolling and monitoring intermittently.

Massachusetts Wildland Fire Occurrence 2017-2024



Multi-Agency Response and Collaboration:

Periods of record setting wildfire occurrence are happening more frequently across most regions of the country. Our experience these past two months across southern New England, New York, New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania shows that the northeast is not immune to this potential impact and threat.

Regardless of what geographic area is being impacted, successful outcomes are heavily influenced by the strong partnerships and collaboration of the many local, state, federal and other agencies bringing resources, intelligence information, planning, logistical, and even financial support to the effort.

This is the underlying success story in our response to this recent wildfire issue here in Massachusetts. Each agency or entity listed below brought some level of response in the form of resources on the ground, and/or support to manage this overall historic demand.

We sincerely thank all those involved for your efforts!

State Agencies

- Governor's Office
- Secretary, Energy and Environmental Affairs
- Secretary, Public Safety
- Department of Conservation & Recreation
 - Bureau of Fire and Forestry
 - State Parks Operations
 - Park Ranger Bureau
 - External Affairs
- Massachusetts Dept. of Fire Services
 - State Fire Marshal
 - Operations
 - State Fire Mobilization System
- Massachusetts Emergency Management
 - Director
 - Operations
 - Statewide Dispatching and Warning system support
 - State Fire Mobilization System
- Massachusetts State Police
 - Air Wing
 - UAS Operations
- Massachusetts Air National Guard
 - Aviation (Blackhawk Helicopters)
- Maine Forest Service
- New Hampshire Forest Protection Bureau
- Connecticut Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Rhode Island DEM, Division of Forest Environment

Federal and Interagency Partners

- U.S.D.A. Forest Service
 - Eastern Area Coordination Center
 - Region 9 Fire and Aviation
 - Northeast States Cooperative Fire Specialist
 - Northeast Area Coordination Center (White Mt. National Forest)
- National Park Service
- National Interagency Fire Center (Boise, ID)
- National Incident Coordination Center
- Northeast Forest Fire Protection Compact
- National Weather Service (Boston, Albany)

Local Agencies

- All Responding Local Fire Departments
- All Responding Local Fire Departments providing Mutual Aid
- Municipal Town Governments
- State Fire Mobilization System at the Regional and Local level

With fire activity dramatically decreasing (just in time for the holiday), this will be the last Daily Wildfire Fire Activity Briefing unless something significant dictates any updates. We hope you found these daily briefings helpful in maintaining your level of situational awareness, and increasing your awareness of wildfire response, incident management, and fire behavior.

As always, please reach out if you have any questions, or to share any suggestions on how we can improve our information sharing.

Wishing you all and your families a very QUIET and SAFE HOLIDAYS!

END OF REPORT

Best!

Dave Celino
Chief Fire Warden, Mass DCR