

Wildfire Report for May 3, 2012

In the past week, 39 fires burned 24 acres in DNR wildfire protection areas. One structure was destroyed and 3 others were threatened during these fires. The main causes of the fires were debris burning and equipment. The largest was an 8.6-acre fire in Price County which was started by a lit cigarette thrown into tall grass. The DNR also assisted local fire departments in extinguishing a 31-acre marsh fire in Winnebago County, which was caused by a squirrel on a power line.

This time of year, tent caterpillars are building their nests in trees. Tent caterpillars are native insects, and although they make unsightly nests, they rarely kill trees. The public is cautioned to **not** burn the nests. Controlling caterpillars is fairly easy and most effective this time of year when the caterpillars and their tents are small. Each evening, the caterpillars return to their tent. Near dark, put on some rubber gloves, pull the tent and its inhabitants out of the tree, and plunge the bundle into soapy water. The next morning the caterpillars will be dead and you can discard the mess. If the tent is out of reach, tear up the tent with a stick and spray in soapy water or a contact insecticide such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt).

The DNR wants to remind everyone to be careful with anything that can start a wildfire when you're out fishing, hunting, camping, doing yard work, or looking for mushrooms. Fire danger can vary from one day to the next this time of the year, depending on weather and dryness of the vegetation. Check this site for current statewide fire danger and burning permit restrictions: dnr.wi.gov (search 'fire').

Firewise Tip: Create firebreaks around your home. Use rock and stone landscaping materials next to buildings instead of wood mulch. Keep your lawn raked free of debris and mowed short. Clear a 10-foot space around propane tanks.