



Maryland

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Department of Natural Resources

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**Maryland Department of Natural Resources Enacts Statewide Burn Ban**

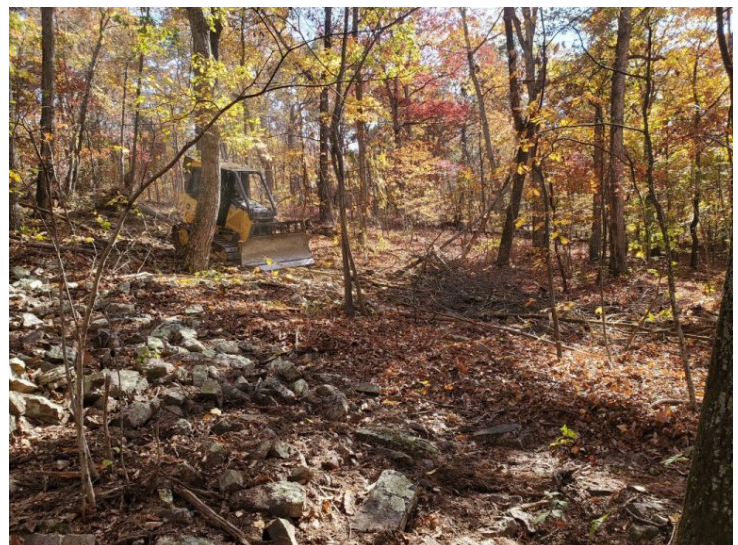
November 1, 2024

*Dry, windy conditions have increased fire risk across the state and fueled ongoing wildfires*

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is implementing a statewide ban on open air burning, effective today, November 1, in all Maryland counties.

Extremely dry conditions persist across the state and have led to an above average number of wildfires statewide, and conditions are not expected to change in the near future. The ban will remain in effect until the Maryland Forest Service determines the state has received enough precipitation to reduce the threat of wildfires statewide.

State law enacted in 2007 authorizes the Department of Natural Resources' Secretary, at the recommendation of the Maryland Forest Service, to implement such a ban when landscape and weather conditions warrant. Open-air burning such as campfires as well as charcoal grilling are not permitted under the burn ban, but state law does permit the use of propane grills.



“We do not make these determinations lightly and understand this may require some people to adjust their plans,” said Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz.

“However, a ban of this magnitude is necessary to protect the lives and property of Maryland residents and visitors, as well as the state’s natural resources. Given the significant risk, this is the only option available to us that will allow for statewide monitoring and enforcement to prevent wildfires due to the dangerous conditions. We will be monitoring the wildfire risk daily to determine when it is safe to lift these restrictions.”

Seven Maryland counties – Dorchester, Garrett, Frederick, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester – already have local restrictions in place, and state officials are working with local jurisdictions to monitor conditions and enforcement. Cecil and Washington counties previously advised residents to avoid having outdoor fires earlier this week. Outdoor fire restrictions are also in place for the [entire State of Delaware](#) and [several Pennsylvania counties](#). In most areas of Maryland, trees have dropped a significant portion of their leaves, contributing to the ongoing fire risk.

On Friday, the National Weather Service put in place Red Flag Warnings—indicating a high risk of wildfires due to dry, windy weather conditions—in Washington, Frederick, Carroll, Baltimore, Cecil, and Allegany counties until Friday evening.

Authorized agents of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and all police officers that enforce state laws may enforce the restrictions. The fine for a first citation for violating the ban is \$125.

“While fines may be imposed for violations, the most important result of a ban of this type is that it communicates to the public the severity of the situation, and the critical need to act responsibly to protect lives, property and our environment,” said State Forester Anne Hairston-Strang.

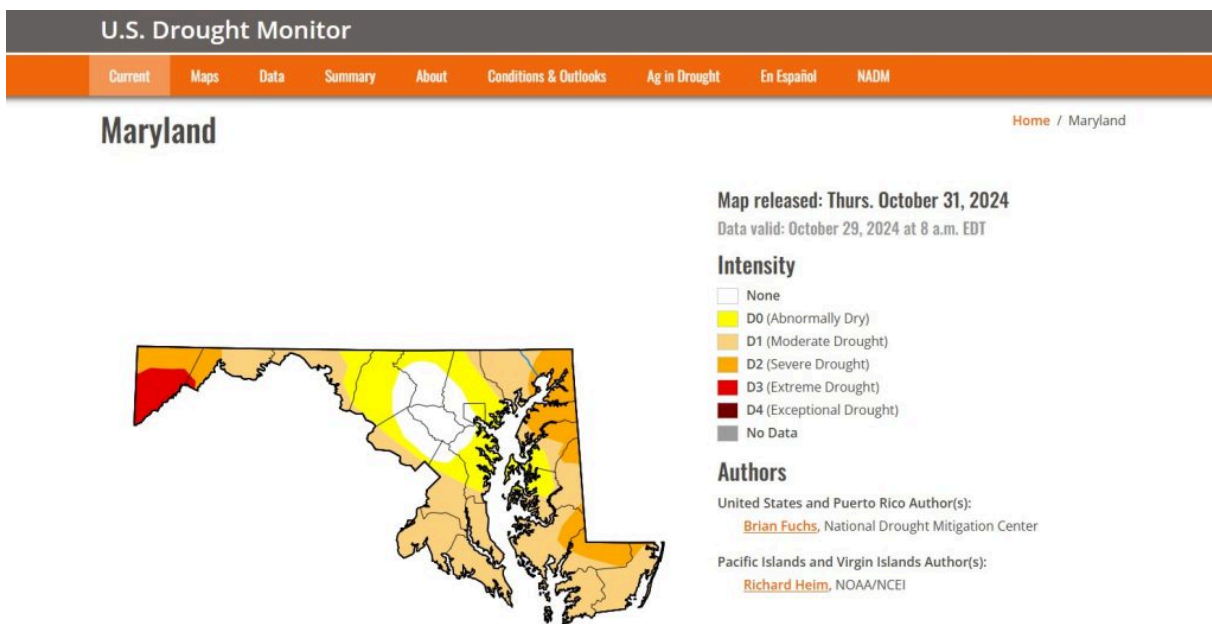
Maryland Forest Service officials made the recommendation to implement the ban based on the following data:

- Since October 1, the Forest Service has responded to more than 24 wildfires that have burned 75 acres, more than triple the 10-year average of 7 wildfires burning 21 acres for the month. Forest Service firefighters and partner agencies are currently containing active fires in Washington, Frederick, Anne Arundel, and Worcester counties.
- The state has received less than 25% of the average precipitation for October, with much of the state receiving little or no precipitation with the exception of Garrett and Allegany counties. Those two counties have received less than 50% of the monthly average.
- The National Weather Climate Prediction Center weather outlook for the next 6-10 days calls for normal or below normal precipitation for most of the state.

Since 1988, the State of Maryland has enacted the full statutory ban in 1988, 1995, 1999, and 2006 and the less stringent regulatory ban four times, in 1991, 1998, 2001 and 2002. Historically, restrictions have remained in place from one to eight weeks, with the 2006 ban lasting from March 31 to April 24. The ban will be lifted as early as safely possible.

Authority to affect the ban is granted in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Natural Resources Article, Title 5-720.

*Maryland Forest Service crews work to suppress smoldering leaves from a wildfire in Washington County. Photo by Aaron Cook, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.*



Drought conditions are widespread throughout Maryland as of Oct. 31. Credit: U.S. Drought Monitor

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