

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Polk County Officials Issue Burn Ban**

**Bartow, Fla. (Mar. 31, 2023)** – As Polk County continues experiencing dry weather conditions due to a prolonged lack of rainfall, Polk County Fire Rescue (PCFR) has issued an official burn ban ordinance.

The current increased risk of brush fires and uncontrolled fires are a threat to Polk County's safety. The dry conditions don't show signs of easing up any time in the near future, so Polk County Fire Rescue has issued the burn ban.

The burn ban includes:

1. Campfires;
2. Bonfires;
3. Unpermitted controlled burns;
4. Burning of yard and household trash;
5. Burning of construction debris;
6. Burning of organic debris;
7. Igniting of fireworks; and
8. Noncommercial burning of materials other than for religious or ceremonial purposes, in which case they must be contained in a barbecue grill or barbecue pit, and the total fuel area cannot exceed three feet in diameter and two feet in height.

"Polk County Fire Rescue has held off as long as we possibly can on issuing this burn ban," said Polk County Fire Rescue Chief, Hezedeon A. Smith, D.M. "The current dry conditions are favorable for the rapid development and spread of brush fires throughout the County. Ensuring the safety of every resident and visitor throughout Polk County and minimizing the likeliness for loss of property county wide are top priorities for Polk County Fire Rescue."

More than 50 percent of Polk County is averaging over 501 on the Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI). The KBDI index is a continuous reference scale used by the Florida Forest Service to

assess the likelihood and severity of brush fires. The scale begins at zero, which reflects no danger, and rises to 800, which reflects extreme danger.

The burn ban applies to all unincorporated Polk and the following municipalities: Auburndale, Eagle Lake, Lake Alfred, Mulberry, Lake Hamilton, Haines City, Hillcrest Heights, Polk City, Winter Haven, Davenport, Dundee, Lakeland, Bartow, Frostproof, Fort Meade and Highland Park.

Anyone who refuses to comply or violates this burn ban shall be in violation of County Ordinance 08-015 and can be punished by a fine not to exceed \$500 or by imprisonment by a term not to exceed 60 days in the county jail or both.

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