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Study Shows Average 47 percent Loss of Value Due to Wildfires in Kentucky, Tennessee *Losses extend beyond damage of trees*

Frankfort, Ky. (Feb. 24, 2012) – Forestry researchers at the University of Kentucky Department of Forestry and the University of Tennessee recently completed a study to determine the loss of timber value associated with wildfire damage. The study funded by the Kentucky Division of Forestry with a grant by the U.S. Forest Service focused on the Appalachian region of Kentucky and Tennessee, which are areas of extremely high wildfire occurrence.

According to the report findings, the average loss in value when a forest is burned by wildfire is nearly half (47 percent) of what it would be if not burned at all. Both burned and unburned sites in the study were compared to determine actual fire damage, as well as the overall effects of fire on density and structure. On average, burned stands were valued \$351.82 an acre less than stands that weren't burned. While forests are immediately affected by wildfires, loss of volume from trees being damaged and the change of species in the forest due to wildfire account for nearly two-thirds of the reason for the loss in value.

"Unfortunately, our study found that the financial losses from wildfire extend well beyond damage to individual trees," said Dr. Jeff Stringer, a University of Kentucky professor who led the study. "We found that repeated burning – a common occurrence in our region – changes the species and structure of our forests resulting in significant long-term losses."

While an actual dollar value has not been determined before, landowners and forest industries have known for years the results of wildfires. "Over 90 percent of wildfires in Kentucky are caused by humans with over 60 percent deliberately set. This study clearly demonstrates the need to protect our forests from wildfire and to address Kentucky's wildfire arson problem," said Leah MacSwords, director of KDF. "The loss of

value directly impacts all the forest landowners across the state, our forest industries that depend on quality wood for their products, and rural communities where forestry contributes to the local economy.”

Bob Bauer, executive director of the Kentucky Forest Industries Association, agrees. “This study confirms and puts a value on the tremendous economic loss to our wood products industry and landowners that results from wildfires that occur throughout the Commonwealth.”

It is important to note that this study does not include other values of Kentucky’s and Tennessee’s forests such as protecting water quality, clean air, wildlife habitat, aesthetics and tourism. For more information about the study, please contact KDF at 502-564-4496.

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