



FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION
VERMONT



AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

FOREST FIRES AND FIRE PREVENTION STATUTE REFORM

Dan Dillner, State Forest Fire Supervisor

1/15/26

WELCOME



2025 VERMONT WILDLAND FIRE PROGRAM UPDATE

84 Fires for 66 Acres

Wet spring and early summer conditions
with few fires

Drought by mid-July led to most summer
fires in 25 years

164 days Moderate or greater fire danger

Scotch Hill Road Fire, Fair Haven, July 23rd

2025 Vermont Wildland Fire Program Update

Vermont was at Preparedness Level 4 for over 2 weeks

12 response requests for FPR resources; FPR staff worked on fires in VT for 24 days

Type 1 helicopter pre-positioned for VT, ME and NH



Brownell Mountain Fire, Williston, October 4th

2025 VERMONT WILDLAND FIRE PROGRAM UPDATE

Volunteer Fire Assistance:

- 2025 Wildland Fire Trainings:
 - 6 wildland fire control courses
 - 5 virtual statewide wildland fire trainings
 - Total of 550 students!
- 50/50 PPE and Equipment Purchasing:
 - 33 towns
 - \$40k grants for PPE for rural fire departments.



Hapgood Fire, Peru, September 6th

2025 VERMONT WILDLAND FIRE PROGRAM UPDATE



2025 FPR Resources:

- 5 Forestry staff went on 7 fire assignments in Alaska, Missouri, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Vermont.
- Due to severe drought conditions in Vermont, by mid summer FPR staff remained in-state to be available for fire response in Vermont.

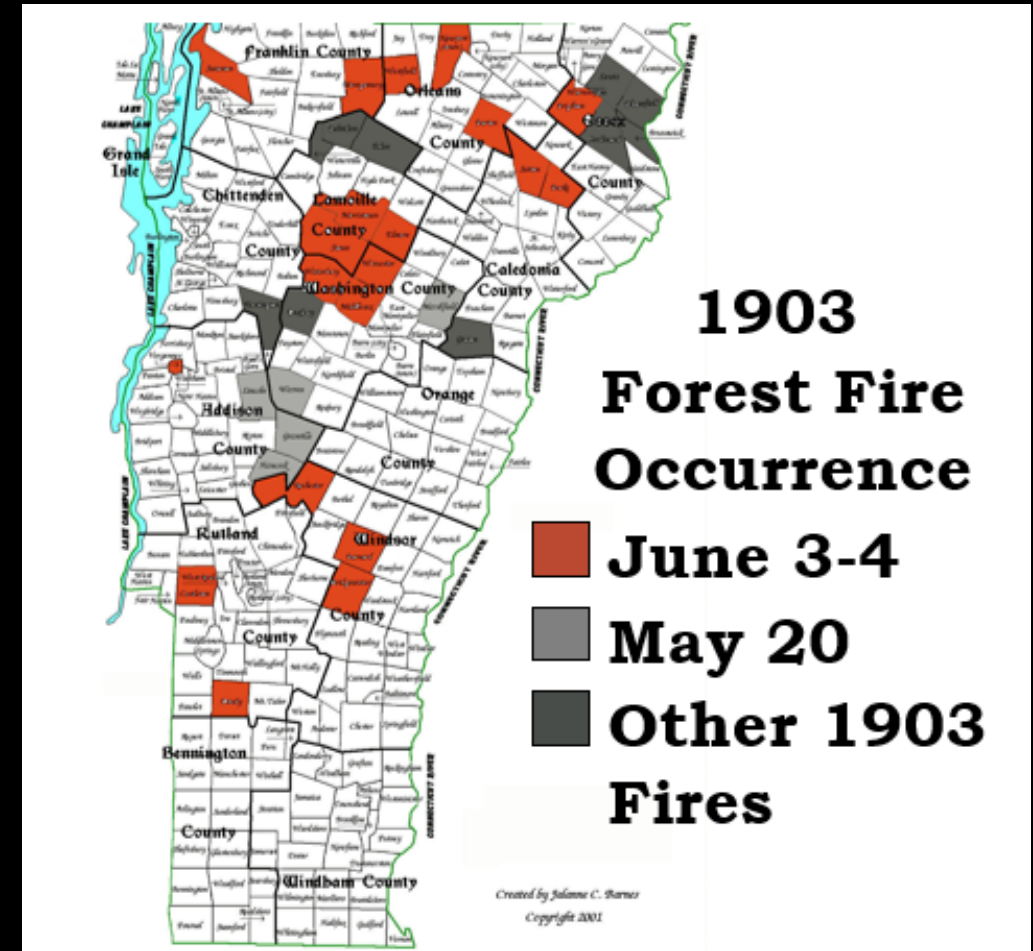


Other Accomplishments:

- 1 new fire response vehicle
- New UTV skid unit
- Approval to order a Type 6 engine!

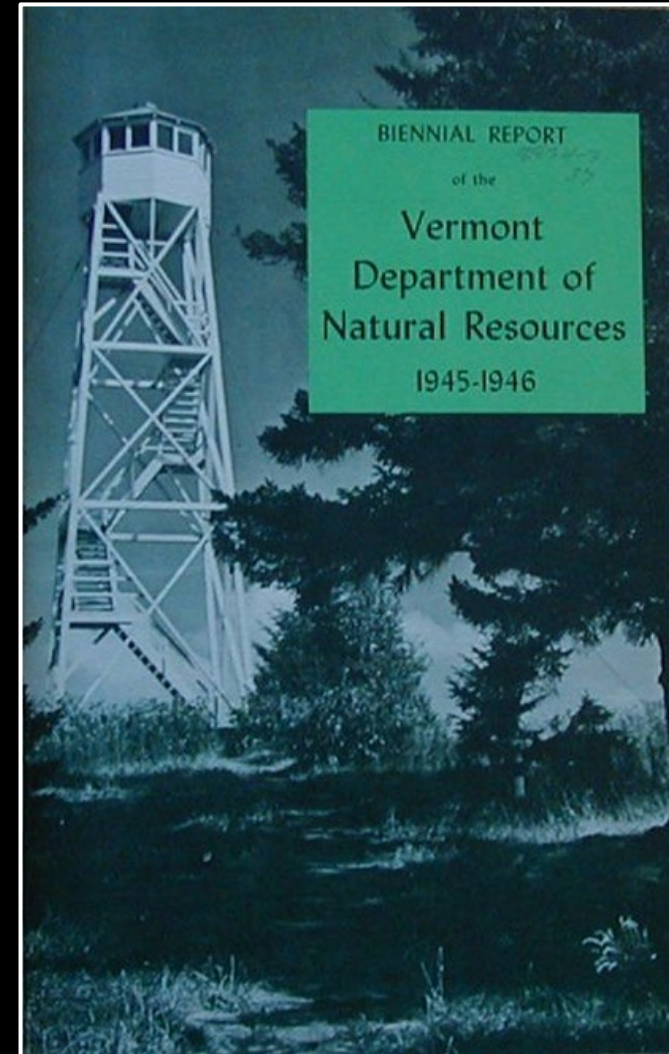
BACKGROUND ON TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS

- Triggered by wildfires that devastated the northeast in the early 1900's and late 1800's; 5,000 acres burned in VT in 1903
- New Forest Fire Warden system established by statute in 1904
- The first forest fire wardens were selectmen from each town; in 1912 selectboard appointed wardens w/ state approval



BACKGROUND ON TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS

- Current forest fire and fire prevention statutes were intended for a time with few fire departments
- Designed to have FPR oversee town forest fire wardens
- Has continued to be a separate system from local fire departments
- Warden Program has undergone numerous changes over the past 122 years



LOOKING FORWARD...

- In 2023, 13 million acres burned in Quebec
- In 2024, 4,600 acres burned in Massachusetts
- In 2024, The 112-acre Hawthorne Fire in CT cost millions to suppress, w/ 2 firefighter fatalities
- 2025 Vermont had the worst drought in 130 years
- In 2024 and 2025 Vermont had 21 wildfires that were multi-day events, with several lasting 7+ days



Big Hollow Fire, Starksboro, November 2024

LOOKING FORWARD...

- Vermont FPR is proposing a suite of reforms to the Forest Fire and Fire Prevention Statute to improve legal framework for fire response and prevention.
- Proposed changes are intended to modernize the forest fire and fire prevention statutes and increase Vermont's preparedness for a large wildfire.
- FPR has engaged in consultation with Fire Chiefs and Town Forest Fire Wardens and conducted a survey to identify reform priorities and solicit information on reform approaches.
- Draft bill language provided to Rep. Hooper and we appreciate his support in bringing this forward.



Killington Fire, May 2021

§2603. POWERS AND DUTIES: COMMISSIONER



Current State:

- The Commissioner or designee shall be the State fire warden and may act as, and in place of, the fire warden of any municipality as provided under subchapter 4 of this chapter.

Concerns:

- Intent of Commissioner authority not defined



§2603. POWERS AND DUTIES: COMMISSIONER



Proposed Changes:

- Clarify the authority of the commissioner to:
 - Appoint special forest fire wardens
 - Take command of any forest fire within the state and ability to delegate that authority
 - Serve on the NFFPC (COMPACT)
 - Ban the kindling of fires on ANR lands

Expected Outcome:

- Clear lines of authority to enable prompt response and adequate resources to manage a large incident



§2641. TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS

Current State:

- Town forest fire wardens and deputy wardens appointed by FPR Commissioner for 5-year term (with selectboard approval)
- Town Forest Fire Warden has two main duties:
 - Responsible for forest fire suppression and may delegate to chief
 - Issues permits to kindle fire



§2641. TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS

Concerns:

- VSA 10 §2644 states that the town forest fire warden has legal authority over forest fires
- VSA 20 § 2673 states that the chief engineer has legal authority over the apparatus and personnel associated with the fire department.
- The town forest fire warden issues permits to kindle fire and fire department responds if fire escapes



§2641. TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS

Proposed changes:

- Identify the chief engineer of the fire department that provides protection to a town as the town forest fire warden.
- Clarify that special fire wardens are state employees.
- Gives authority for town forest fire warden to designate as many deputy town forest fire wardens as they need to issue burn permits.



§2641. TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS

Expected Outcome:

- Aligns authority for all fire suppression under the fire chief in a municipality.
- Allow a town forest fire warden to appoint deputies who can issue permits to kindle fire.
- Shift town forest fire warden and deputy town forest fire warden appointments to municipal control.



§2642. SALARY AND COMPENSATION OF TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS



Current State:

- Salary for the town forest fire warden is paid by the town
- FPR provides an annual payment of \$30, as well as compensation for reporting fires and attending trainings

Concerns:

- Will be unnecessary with changes to §2641. FPR no longer appoints or requires attendance at trainings

Title 10 : Conservation and Development

Chapter 083 : Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Subchapter 004 : FOREST FIRES AND FIRE PREVENTION

(Cite as: 10 V.S.A. § 2642)

§ 2642. Salary and compensation of town forest fire wardens

(a) The salary of a town forest fire warden shall be determined by the selectboard members for time spent in the performance of the duties of his or her office, which shall be paid by the town. In addition thereto, he or she shall receive from the Commissioner \$30.00 annually for fulfilling the requirements of section 2645 of this title and keeping the required State records. He or she shall also receive from the Commissioner \$30.00 per diem for attendance at each training required by the Commissioner. He or she shall also receive annually an amount of \$10.00 for each fire report that is submitted by the forest fire warden under section 2644 of this title.

§2642. SALARY AND COMPENSATION OF TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDENS



Proposed changes:

- Provision for towns to pay town forest fire wardens remains
- Remove FPR payment provisions

Expected outcome:

- Aligns payment with municipal and fire department
- Annual savings

Title 10 : Conservation and Development

Chapter 083 : Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

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§2644. DUTIES AND POWERS OF TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDEN



Current State:

- Report all wildland fires within two weeks of the extinguishment
- Deputy forest fire wardens have same responsibilities of town forest fire wardens.

Concerns:

- FPR wildland fire staff need to be aware of all wildfires to determine preparedness

Example of a Forest Fire Report

State of Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Forest Fire Report			
REQUIRED INFORMATION	Fire #	Date Received:	
	Date Entered:	Approved by:	
	Date of Fire: 4-10-2017	Town: FORESTVILLE	
	Fire Name: POND ROAD FIRE		
	Fire Cause: DEBRIS BURNING		
	Latitude: 44.06175	Was a permit issued?	Was the fire a violation?
	Longitude: 72.51130	Yes (No)	(Yes) / No
	NUMBER OF ACRES BURNED		DATE/TIME LOG
	Grass 0.5	Time Fire Reported 1:30 am	
	Brush 1.5	Arrival on Scene 1:45 am	
Woodland/Forest	Fire Controlled 3:45 am		
Total Acres 2.0	Fire Extinguished 5:15 am		
	4-10-17 Date		
	Town Forest Fire Warden Signature: [Signature] Date: 4-15-2017		
IMPORTANT: Please include a map on the back of this report showing fire location with landmarks, fire origin (if known), wind direction and North arrow			
ADDITIONAL FIRE INFORMATION	Wind Direction from: NW	Wind Speed (mph): 20	Temperature (F): 60
	INCIDENT INJURIES/DAMAGES		# Residences # Other Structures
	# Injuries 0	Property Threatened 1	
	# Fatalities 0	Property Damaged	
		Property Destroyed 1 Shed	
	Person(s) Responsible: John Doe		Approx. Age: 52
	Who Reported the Fire: Mary Doe		
	FIRE SUPPRESSION RESOURCES ON SCENE	Number of Personnel or Apparatus Identification	Total Hours
	Town Forest Fire Wardens	1	3.5
	In-town Firefighters	3	3.5
Mutual Aid Firefighters	4	3.0	
Brush Trucks	2	3.5	
Engines/ETA's	1	3.5	
Tankers	1	3.5	
Other: ATV / UTV / Chainsaw /	1 ATV	3.0	
Other: ATV / UTV / Chainsaw /			

Example of a Forest Fire Report- Back

§2644. DUTIES AND POWERS OF TOWN FOREST FIRE WARDEN

Proposed Change:

- Inform FPR within 24 hours of discovery for fires not on ANR lands
- Fire reports within 48 hours of extinguishment
- Deputy town forest fire warden role to only issue permits

Expected Outcome:

- FPR is aware of all wildfires and can staff appropriately
- Deputy town forest fire wardens alleviate additional workload on fire chief (town forest fire warden)



Hapgood Fire, Peru, September 6

§2643. TOWN'S LIABILITY FOR SUPPRESSION OF FOREST FIRES; STATE AID



Current State:

- Municipalities are responsible for suppression costs on non-ANR lands; however, FPR may reimburse suppression costs.
- FPR shall reimburse for suppression costs on ANR lands.

Concerns:

- Lack of clarity when FPR reimburses for fires on all lands
- No assurance that FPR is involved in suppression on ANR lands.



§2643. TOWN'S LIABILITY FOR SUPPRESSION OF FOREST FIRES; STATE AID

Proposed Changes:

- Suppression costs on non-ANR lands may be paid for if funds are available through other emergency funding sources
- On ANR lands provides clear requirements for reimbursement of suppression costs by FPR

Expected Outcome:

- Clear guidance related to payment on all lands
- Ensures FPR is involved in suppression on ANR lands to be eligible for reimbursement



§2645. OPEN BURNING; PERMITS



Current State:

- Permit to kindle fire is required for open burning with the following exceptions:
 - The kindling of a fire in a location where there is snow surrounding the open burning site;
 - Fires built in stone arches... existing fire rings ... that are not located within woodland or a field containing dry grass or other flammable material contiguous to woodland;
 - The kindling of a fire in a location that is 200 feet or more from any woodland...or other flammable material contiguous to woodland;

STATE OF VERMONT
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
PERMIT TO KINDLE FIRE

Permit No. Date Issued 20

Permission is hereby granted to
to kindle a fire in accordance with Vermont State Forest Fire Laws (10 V.S.A. Chapter 83, Section 2645)
at
in the town of on date(s) 20

Special Written Conditions (if required by Warden)
.
.

I, the undersigned permittee, understand the law and my responsibility under this permit.

. Permittee's Signature Warden's Signature

READ CONDITIONS ON REVERSE SIDE OF THIS PERMIT BEFORE BURNING

§2645. OPEN BURNING; PERMITS

Concerns:

- There has been ambiguity around the term campfires
- Statutes do not provide clear guidance related to campfires.
- Commissioner does not have authority to ban campfires.



§2645. OPEN BURNING; PERMITS

Proposed changes:

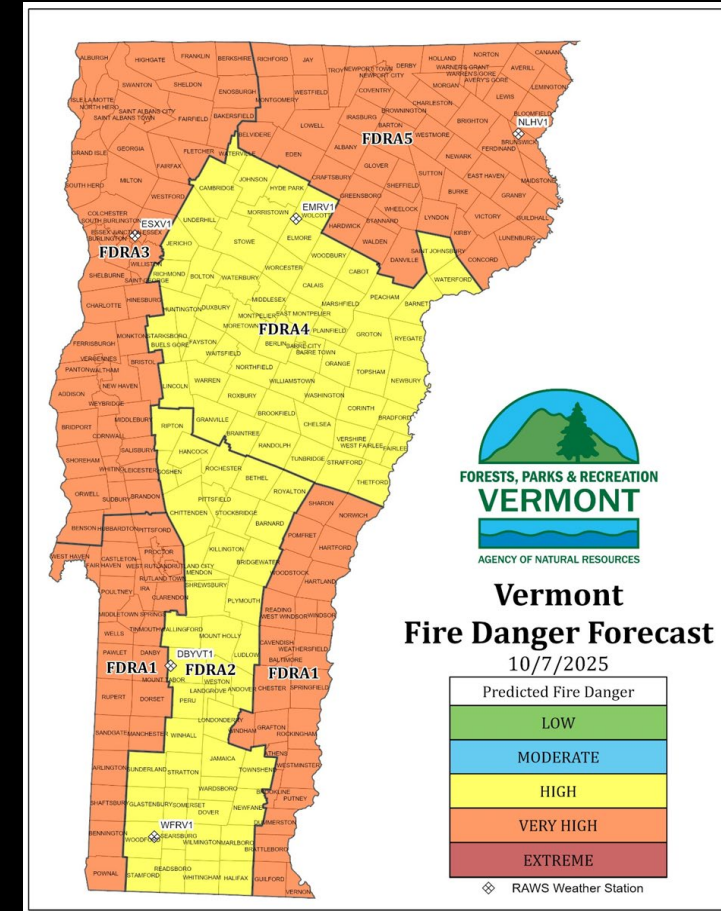
- Defines types of fires and permit requirements (current statutes do not define campfires or prescribed burns):
 - Category 1 – Campfires 36” or less: do not need a permit but can be banned by Commissioner.
 - Category 2 – Debris fires greater than 36”: require a permit from town forest fire Warden; can be banned by Commissioner or fire warden.
 - Category 3 – Prescribed burns; require a permit from Town Forest Fire Warden and a plan; can be banned by Commissioner and fire warden.
- Provides a scalable approach to prohibit specific types of fires within the state when wildland fire risk exists



§2645. OPEN BURNING; PERMITS

Expected Outcome:

- Clearly defines what types of fires require a permit.
- Enables the State to have a scalable approach to restricting categories of fires during elevated fire danger.



§2646. PROCLAMATION BY GOVERNOR PROHIBITING KINDLING OF FIRES; CLOSING OF FORESTLANDS

Current State:

- Governor can prohibit the kindling of fire in any town, for a specific time-period
- Exempts owners of households and their tenants
- Proclamation needs to be published in newspapers

Proposed Changes:

- Removes exemptions
- Modernizes communications



STATE OF VERMONT

PHILIP H. HOFF, Governor

A Proclamation

WHEREAS, the forest land, woodland, and brush land in the State of Vermont is, according to competent authority, at a state of danger from destruction by fire, and

WHEREAS, no relief by rain or snow fall appears to be in sight within a time adequate to reduce such fire hazardous condition in the immediate future, and

WHEREAS, the State of Vermont has already suffered loss by fire to our forest lands, woodlands and brush lands, and

WHEREAS, the proven attraction of such lands for hunting and recreational visitors at this time of the year would greatly increase the hazard of additional loss by fire:

NOW, THEREFORE, by the authority vested in me, as Governor of the State of Vermont, pursuant to 10 V. S. A. 1502, I do hereby prohibit the kindling of a fire in or adjoining forest land and close all woodlands and brushland in the State to all persons except the owner and his household, his tenants, servants or agents and persons in the public employment engaged in abating such fire-hazardous condition, and

By the authority vested in me, as Governor of the State of Vermont, pursuant to 10 V. S. A. 4401, I do hereby suspend the open season for the taking of game birds, animals and fish except upon boatable waters which can be reached without passing through woodland.



Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont at Montpelier, this tenth day of October, A. D., 1963.

PHILIP H. HOFF
Governor

By the Governor:

THOMAS J. KENNEY
Secretary of Civil & Military Affairs

REPEAL STATUTE ON UNIFORM FIRE PREVENTION TICKET

Current state:

- Title 10, Chapter 83, Subchapter 7 establishes a Uniform Fire Prevention Ticket within Criminal Division of the Superior Court
- The fees related to these tickets are \$25/violation plus \$25 more each day with total violation is not to exceed \$75

Concerns:

- The process for the uniform fire prevention ticket is onerous; involves superior court
- Relies on fire wardens to write criminal tickets
- This ticket has very rarely been utilized and fines have limited impact due to low fees

Form No. 453
Rev. 7/15 SML

VERMONT FIRE PREVENTION TICKET **A 015751**

COURT ADDRESS Criminal Division Circuit (County) of Vermont

Mailing Address

By the authority of the State of Vermont, the undersigned says:

Last Name (PLEASE PRINT) First Middle

Street

Town, City State Zip Code Tel. No. (for court use)

Age DOB Place of Birth Sex Height Weight

Representing: ☐ Self ☐ Employer/Co. Employer/Co.

On Day of Week Date Time

At Location

In Town

committed the following offense (describe the offense):

IN VIOLATION OF ☐ State Statute Citation 10 V.S.A. § 2645 (a) (Permit) ☐ § 2648 (a) (Slash) against the peace and dignity of the State. Waiver Fine & Surcharge \$

Officer's Title Phone No. Town/Dept.

I further state that I have just and reasonable grounds to believe that the person named above committed this offense. Warden's Signature

I have received a copy of this ticket and understand that failure to answer it may result in the court finding me in contempt. Defendant's Signature

I have reviewed this ticket and have forwarded it to the State's Attorney for prosecution. Date: Supervisor's Signature

FOR PROSECUTOR'S USE ONLY

☐ I hereby enter and prosecute ☐ I hereby dismiss the above complaint.

☐ I amend the charge to Amended Charge Amended Fine & Surcharge

Date Prosecutor's Signature

FOR COURT USE ONLY

COURT'S COPY

I certify that the information on this ticket is a true abstract of the court record in this case. Signature of Clerk

Date Ticket Issued Last Name First Middle

A 015751

REPEAL STATUTE ON UNIFORM FIRE PREVENTION TICKET

Expected Outcome:

- Removes town forest fire warden from process of acting as law enforcement by issuing criminal tickets and FPR from role of administrator
- Allows municipalities to use existing authority regarding enforcement
- May encourage municipalities to create local ordinances for better assistance from law enforcement



Form No. 453 Rev. 7/15 S&L		VERMONT FIRE PREVENTION TICKET		A 015751
COURT ADDRESS Mailing Address		Criminal Division of Vermont Circuit (County)		
By the authority of the State of Vermont, the undersigned says:				
Last Name (PLEASE PRINT)		First	Middle	
Street				
Town, City		State	Zip Code	Tel. No. (for court use)
Age	DOB	Place of Birth	Sex	Height Weight
Representing: ☐ Self ☐ Employer/Co.		Employer/Co.		
On	Day of Week	Date	Time	
At	Location			
In	Town			
committed the following offense (describe the offense):				
IN VIOLATION OF	State Statute Citation 10 V.S.A. ☐ 2645 (a) (Permit) ☐ 2648 (a) (Slash)		against the peace and dignity of the State.	Waiver Fine & Surcharge \$
Officer's Title	Phone No.	Town/Dept.		
I further state that I have just and reasonable grounds to believe that the person named above committed this offense.		Warden's Signature		
I have received a copy of this ticket and understand that failure to answer it may result in the court finding me in contempt.		Defendant's Signature		
I have reviewed this ticket and have forwarded it to the State's Attorney for prosecution.		Supervisor's Signature		
Date:				
FOR PROSECUTOR'S USE ONLY				
☐ I hereby enter and prosecute ☐ I hereby dismiss the above complaint.				
☐ I amend the charge to		Amended Charge	Amended Fine & Surcharge	
Date		Prosecutor's Signature		
FOR COURT USE ONLY				
COURT'S COPY				
I certify that the information on this ticket is a true abstract of the court record in this case.		Signature of Clerk		

INCREASING WILDLAND FIRE RESPONSE CAPACITY REPORT

- The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation shall convene a task force to report on increasing Vermont's capacity for wildland fire response.
- Examine wildland fire incidence and existing response capacity
- Make recommendations regarding necessary equipment and actions to increase wildland fire response capacity



Scotch Hill Road Fire, Fair Haven, July 24th

QUESTIONS?



Scotch Hill Road Fire, Fair Haven, July 23rd