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Report on Wildfires Affecting Murphree Well Field

Due to the extremely dry conditions and lack of appreciable rain the Murphree Well Field has been threatened with three wildfires that have occurred between May 3rd and May 13, 2002. These fires are described below:

Main Street Fire

A fire that occurred at about 4:30PM on Friday May 3rd occurred between Main Street and NE 15th Street. This fire ignited in scrub pine and quickly spread moving Northeasterly toward the Murphree Water Plant burning 45 acres. The immediate concern was the MacMichem Substation that is located at the intersection of NE 15th Street and 53rd Avenue that provides the electrical power to the Murphree Water Treatment Plant and the power line that is located on the South side of 53rd Avenue and also serves 5 production wells that are located on the North Side of 53rd Avenue.

This fire was contained by GF&R, ACF&R and State of Florida Forestry personnel and prevented from jumping across 15th Street and putting the electrical supply to the wells in jeopardy. Winds had carried ash into the filters at the Murphree Water Plant.

The cause of the fire was listed as arson as residents spotted kids moving form an area at about the time of the fire.

NE 73rd Ave Access Road Fire

A fire that occurred at about 3:30PM on Thursday May 8th occurred between Waldo Rd. and the Westerly limits of the Murphree Well Field approximately ¼ mile North of GRU Production Well #9. This fire was started by a car parked by 4 teenagers in a remote area that ignited pine needles under the catalytic converter of their parked vehicle, The fire consumed about ¼ acre of scrub pine and underbrush before being brought under control by the GF&R Department.

The threat with this fire was immediately GRU Production Well Number 9 and the possibility of the fire spreading Westerly to the Murphree Well Field where 4 additional production wells are located.

GRU participated in firefighters by delivering 12,000 gallons of reclaimed water from its Main Street Wastewater Treatment Plant which was used to douse smoldering areas and the remains of the parked vehicle.

The cause of the fire was listed as arson.

Murphree Well Field Fire

A fire that occurred at about 4:15 PM on Saturday May 11th occurred at the Westerly limits of GRU property located inside Murphree Well Field about ¼ mile East of NE 15th Street. This fire ignited in scrub pine and quickly spread moving Westerly and placing GRU production Wells # 11 and #8 in jeopardy.

This fire was contained by GF&R, ACF&R and State of Florida Forestry personnel and prevented from burning and/or melting electrical control equipment and motors located at the wells and destroying overhead power line that services these wells.

Representatives of ACF& RD were stationed at GRU Production Well number 11 and protected the well from fire damage. The fire burned pine trees on the Easterly, Northerly and Southerly sides of the well reaching a point 10 feet from the fence enclosure of the well.

Representatives of the GF &RD were stationed at GRU Production Well number 8 and protected the well from fire damage. The fire burned pine trees on the Easterly and Northerly sides of the well which reached a point 10 feet from the fence enclosure of the well.

Fire fighters from the State Forestry Division managed the operations and brought in helicopters to drop water from the air using a pond for refilling on the Murphree Well Plant site. Fire fighters also brushed fire breaks in the heavily wooded areas to contain the fire.

GRU personnel used several tanker trucks to cool and soak Production Well #8 site and to soak areas at the periphery of the North line of the Murphree Water Plant property. GRU officials also brought in transport equipment to evacuate approximately 20 one ton chlorine cylinders which are stored on-site.

The fire was brought under control at approximately 7:30PM on Saturday night. Mop up operations were continued into Monday and fire fighters were assisted with GRU tankers that were used to douse hot areas.

State Fire officials continue to monitor hot spots.

The cause of the fire was listed as arson.

There have been no damages to any GRU equipment in these fires.