

**Department of Justice**  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of North Carolina

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, July 6, 2017

**Franklin, N.C. Man Sentenced To Five  
Years For Setting Forest Fires**

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Keith Eugene Mann, 50, of Franklin, N.C. was sentenced today (JULY 6) by U.S. District Judge Martin Reidinger to five years in prison for destroying real property of the United States by means of fire, announced Jill Westmoreland Rose, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. Mann was also ordered to serve three years under court supervision.

“Mann set forest fires which damaged natural resources and potentially put many lives at risk, because he ‘wanted to see something burn.’ Thanks to the swift and thorough investigative efforts of our law enforcement partners, Mann was quickly apprehended and he will be punished for his selfish and irresponsible actions,” said U.S. Attorney Rose.

According to today's sentencing hearing and court documents filed in the case, on October 27, 2016, a wildfire was (intentionally set) reported on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Road 388, commonly referred to as Board Tree Road, which is in Macon Co., and within the Nantahala National Forest. Court documents indicate that the fire had been set intentionally. According to court documents, five other fires had been set in close proximity to the fire on Board Tree Road but appeared to have gone out on their own. Over the course of the investigation of these small fires, law enforcement located several

wooden stem matches which helped to establish that the fires were intentionally set.

According to court documents, on November 22, 2016, a wildfire was reported at the end of U.S. Forest Service Road 763, commonly referred to as Jones Creek Road, by an individual who identified himself as “Keith Mann.” USFS firefighters responded to the fire and took immediate suppression action. The following day, on November 23, 2016, law enforcement returned to the fire site, where they observed a small cardboard box located at the origin of the fire, with numerous burned wooden stemmed matches next to the box. Following up on the Macon County 911 call, investigators spoke with Keith Mann who admitted to setting the fires both on Board Tree Road and on Jones Creek Road.

Mann pleaded guilty to the federal arson charge in March 2017. Mann is currently in federal custody and will be transferred to the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons upon designation of a federal facility. All federal sentences are served without the possibility of parole.

In making today’s announcement, U.S. Attorney Rose thanked the U.S. Forest Service and the Macon County Sheriff’s Office for their investigation of this case.

Assistant United States Attorney Richard Edwards, of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Asheville, prosecuted the case.