

Fire Destroys 230 Hectares of Woodlands in Western Cuba



Havana, May 7 (RHC) -- A forest fire raging in Cuba's western Pinar del Rio province since Saturday has destroyed more than 230 hectares of woodland, state media reported Tuesday.

The fire, probably sparked by a poacher early Saturday in the area of San Juan y Martinez, 170 km west of Havana, has been brought under control.

Cuba's corps of forest rangers said several specialized groups of firefighters remain in the area to fully extinguish the fire and prevent its spread.

A drought, coupled with high temperatures and strong winds, helped spread the fire through the area's pine forests, rangers said, adding the blaze posed no threat to residential communities nor tobacco plantations.

San Juan y Martinez is located in the Vueltabajo region, famed for its top-tier tobacco crops, which are used to manufacture Cuba's quality Habano cigars.

Pinar del Rio is Cuba's greenest province, with more than 44 percent of its territory being woodland.

In March, a fire started by a negligent driver burned for a week and destroyed 8,232 hectares of vegetation in the eastern province of Camaguey.

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