

If you think it is hot, you are correct.

Trees are shedding leaves and crops and lawns are browning, all thanks to high pressure zones stagnating over Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Illinois that are prolonging clear skies and record 100-plus temperatures.

At their last business meeting on June 20, Scott County Commissioners Mark Hays, Bob Tobias and Larry Blevins discussed the drought conditions being experienced this month, which has been exceptionally dry. They decided to have a "state of emergency" burning ban proclamation drawn up and ready for their signatures if appreciable rain did not fall in the next week or so.

They didn't have to wait a week.

Their disaster emergency proclamation restricting outdoor burning in the county was put into action on Monday, June 25. On June 26, a statement was released, advising, "Scott County Commissioners and Scott County Fire Chiefs are strongly encouraging residents to attend public displays of fireworks (on or about July 4) and limit their personal use of fireworks."

That might put a bit of a crimp in people's plans for Independence Day, but better than dealing with life- and property-threatening out-of-control field fires.

Anyone with a lawn knows how "crunchy" most of the grass is right now. If grass gets sun all day long, odds are the tips if not most of the grass plant has been affected. An out-of-control fire can "dance" on dried grass tips, the wind pushing it quickly across a lawn or field and allowing it to spread and threaten buildings and people.

Consequently, the Commissioners' emergency proclamation states that officials find the drought conditions allow the county to be at risk of widespread fire hazards.

Effective until further notice, the following activities are prohibited in Scott County:

- Campfires and other recreational fires, unless such fires are enclosed in a fire ring with dimensions of (at least) 23 inches in diameter by 10 inches higher or larger.

- Open burning of any kind using conventional fuel such as wood, or other combustible material, with the exception of grills fueled by charcoal briquets or propane.

- Burning of debris, such as timber vegetation, including such debris that results from building construction activities.

Burning is allowed from dawn to dusk only in so-called "burn barrels" which have a 1/4-inch mesh top. Burn barrels are allowed in the county but not in the cities of Austin and Scottsburg.

Charcoal from permitted grills cannot be removed from grills until it has been thoroughly extinguished.

Commissioners will revisit the drought situation as conditions continue to see if more stringent restrictions are needed or if the ban can be lifted.

Though parts of the county have been lucky enough to get perhaps 1/2 to an inch of rain recently, showers were not widespread and did little to alleviate dry conditions. From recent weather forecasts, it appears that the high pressure zone will persist for at least another seven days or so.