

The National Herald

Boosting Forest Fire Prevention, Greece Will Add 200 Recruits

By TNH Staff

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ATHENS – With the one-year anniversary approaching of the July 23, 2018 wildfires north of Greece's capital that killed 102, plans have been rolled out for forest fire prevention that include boosting staff by 200.

Alternate Environment Minister Sokratis Famellos, with the ruling Radical Left SYRIZA blamed for a chaotic response to the disaster and trying to hide the death toll, said the plan also is aimed at protecting the area around the seaside village of Mati, which was almost wiped out and where 26 people died huddled together on a cliff over the waters below.

Famellos said funding will be boosted for forest protection, adding that a system would be set up to monitor the use of funds without explaining that hadn't been done during the four years the government was in power despite constant warnings of likely catastrophes.

His comments came after conservation group WWF Hellas claimed the ministry had no idea where forestry funding ended up or if it wasn't even spent for fire protection or went into someone else's hands.

Famellos said the ministry would follow recommendations by an independent committee that pointed to the lack of a national strategy to prevent and respond to forest fires and a lack of cooperation between state bodies.

The government, however, faces being booted from power with July 7 snap elections coming with polls showing it's likely to be replaced by the major opposition New Democracy unless Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras mounts a last-minute comeback by that time.

Source: <https://www.thenationalherald.com/247901/boosting-forest-fire-prevention-greece-will-add-200-recruits/>