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News Release

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Acting Regional Forester Announces Temporary Developed Recreation Site Closures and Fire Restrictions; Some Recreation Opportunities Remain Available

DENVER, Colo., April 7, 2020 – Acting Regional Forester Jennifer Eberlien today announced and signed an [order](#) to temporarily close developed recreation sites and an [order](#) to implement fire restrictions within the Forest Service’s Rocky Mountain Region to align with local, state and federal orders and guidelines to protect public health and safety. The region includes 24 national forests and grasslands across Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming.

“While we know that going outside provides forest and grassland visitors needed space, exercise and satisfaction, we are taking the risks presented by COVID-19 seriously,” said Eberlien. “We are providing some recreation opportunities where we can while protecting and keeping employees, the public and our communities safe from the virus, as well as protecting and keeping communities and natural and cultural resources safe from unwanted human-caused wildfires.”

Recreation Closures

Developed recreation sites are temporarily closed while dispersed camping, hiking and river uses are allowed, although discouraged. Closed developed recreation sites include campgrounds, day-use areas, picnic areas, and any other constructed facility amenities – such as potable water stations, fire rings/grills, picnic tables, restroom facilities with flush or vaulted toilets, and trashcans and trash collection services. Parking facilities, trails and trailheads remain open. Dispersed camping includes camping on a national forest or grassland where recreation facilities or services are not provided.

Forest and grassland visitors camping in dispersed recreation sites, hiking or embarking on river activities are encouraged to adhere to the following safety and responsibility guidelines.

- Stay close to home to keep other communities safe.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others.
- Avoid crowding in parking lots, trails, scenic overlooks and other areas.
- Take [CDC precautions](#) to prevent illnesses like COVID-19.
- Prepare for limited or no services, such as restroom facilities and garbage collection.
- Prepare to pack out trash and human waste.

Fire Restrictions

Effective immediately until rescinded, the following is prohibited:

1. Igniting, building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, including charcoal grills and barbecues, coal and wood-burning stoves, and shepherd’s stoves.
2. Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle, trailer or building.

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The following persons are exempt from fire restrictions:

1. Persons with a Forest Permit, Form FS-7700-48, specifically exempting them from the effect of this Order in the areas listed above.
2. Any Federal, State or local officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty is exempt from Prohibitions.
3. Persons using pressurized liquid or gas devices (stoves, grills or lanterns) with shut-off valves in an area at least three feet from any flammable materials are exempt from Prohibition #1.
4. Residents, owners or lessees within the areas listed above who are using a fire in a permanent dwelling with an effective and properly installed USDA- or SAE- approved spark arrestor, are exempt from Prohibition #1.

Fire restrictions enhance public safety, protect natural and cultural resources and help prevent human-caused wildfires. Several criteria are used to determine when to implement fire restrictions, including fire activity levels, current and predicted weather, fuel moisture and the availability of emergency and firefighting resources. Additional restrictions may be required if conditions warrant.

Entering upon closed areas or igniting, building, maintaining, attending or using a fire or smoking on national forests and grasslands is a violation of Federal law and may result in consequent fines and possible jail time.

All offices are conducting business and providing virtual services. For specific forest and grassland information, please visit the region's [forest and grassland directory](#).

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