



San Juan National Forest
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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 10, 2018

San Juan National Forest to Implement Forest-wide Closure Order

DURANGO, CO –The San Juan National Forest (SJNF) is planning to implement Forest-wide Stage 3 fire closure this week, which will prohibit most entry into the forest. The purpose of the closure is to protect natural resources and public safety due to the danger of wildland fire. Fire danger on the SJNF remains very high due to exceptional drought and fuel conditions. The closure order is expected to be signed Tuesday, June 12, 2018 and remain in effect until the forest receives sufficient moisture to improve conditions.

The closure order will prohibit entry into the San Juan National Forest, including entry by the general public, most administrative entry by Forest Service employees, and most uses authorized under Forest Service permits and contracts. This means that forest campgrounds, day use areas, roads, and trails will be closed, including wilderness areas, and that hiking, dispersed camping, and other recreational activities are prohibited. Exemptions might be granted on a case-by-case basis with a written authorization from the Forest Service, which would include specific requirements for fire prevention. Exemptions must be requested from the appropriate District Ranger (below). Federal, state, or local officers conducting specific duties are exempt. The McPhee Recreation Area Complex boat ramp and marina will likely remain open but no shoreline use will be allowed.

The SJNF covers 1.8 million acres within the Dolores Ranger District, the Columbine Ranger District, and the Pagosa Ranger District across nine counties in southwestern Colorado. County and state roads and U.S. highways that cross Forest Service lands will not be affected by this order. On-going road closures due to the 416 Fire will continue to be managed by the La Plata County Sheriff. Businesses in local communities will remain open for business during the Forest closure at their discretion.

San Juan National Forest Supervisor, Kara Chadwick, wants concerned citizens to know that instituting a forest closure is an extremely difficult decision, and she is aware that the closure will affect a great many people, businesses, partner agencies, forest management activities, and the public. Forest managers use several criteria to determine when to implement restrictions and closures, including fuel moistures, current and predicted weather, values at risk from wildfire, fire activity levels, and available firefighting resources. The SJNF implemented Stage 1 fire restrictions on May 1, then Stage 2 fire restrictions on June 1, but conditions continued to worsen. “The indices our fire team uses to predict fire danger are at historic levels well before we can expect any significant moisture from the seasonal monsoons,” SJNF Forest Fire Staff Officer, Richard Bustamante said. “Under current conditions, one abandoned campfire or spark could cause a catastrophic wildfire, and we are not willing to take that chance with the natural and cultural resources under our protection and care, or with human life and property.”

Violating Stage 3 fire restrictions or going into a closed area carries a mandatory appearance in federal court, and is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment of up to six months, or both.

The signed closure order will be posted on the San Juan National Forest website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/sanjuan/home>. You can also follow [@SanJuanNF](https://www.facebook.com/SanJuanNF) on Facebook and Twitter.

For more information, please contact:

San Juan National Forest Supervisor’s Office at 970-247-4874,
Dolores Ranger District at 970-882-7296,
Columbine Ranger District at 970-884-2512,
or the Pagosa Ranger District at 970-264-2268.

To report a fire on federal lands, please contact the Durango Interagency Fire Dispatch Center at (970) 385-1324.

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