



NEWS RELEASE

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Department of
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Forest Service
Salmon - Challis
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2008 Firewood Cutting Season Already Underway

Salmon, ID, Spring 2008 – It's been a long winter and, for most of us, the thought of gathering firewood for next year is a low priority when considering our spring chores. However, some hearty souls have been cutting firewood all winter. Pickup trucks, trailers, and stake-side flatbed trucks stacked high with firewood have routinely been seen hauling down Williams Creek and the Salmon River road or parked somewhere along Main Street with a "wood for sale" sign.

On the Salmon-Cobalt Ranger District, both Deep Creek and Panther Creek have been popular winter firewood cutting areas. Their popularity can be attributed to all season access and an abundance of dead and dying Douglas-fir. The primary cause for the mortality is both Douglas-fir beetle and the 2000 Clear Creek fire. In some cases these agents have worked together as the fire-weakened fir trees have been pre-disposed to attack by the beetle. It is a picture that has become common throughout western Forests and a contributing cause to the large destructive fires we have witnessed during the last decade.

The Salmon-Challis National Forest is fully supportive of having members of the Public utilize this valuable resource. In 2007 the Forest issued 1,170 firewood permits totaling 5,885 cords. As part of this total, the Lemhi County Energy Assistance program funded the harvest and distribution of 108 cords while the Custer County Energy Assistance program provided funding for the harvest and distribution of 64 cords.

Salmon-Cobalt District Ranger Kimberley Nelson has observed some of the wintertime firewood cutting operations along Panther Creek and noted the challenges that winter firewood harvest presents. "It's a difficult situation along Panther Creek because the road is located right in the Creek bottom and the snow levels limit falling and limbing activities to the road corridor."

As a result of these conditions a lot of slash is being left both on the roadway and in the roadside ditches along Panther Creek. Ranger Nelson explained that "when Forest and County road crews try to clean those ditches while blading Panther Creek the slash becomes a major hindrance. In some cases we will have to use a backhoe or loader to clean the ditches and the blading job may require an additional pass by the grader. Our road maintenance budget is limited and having to cleanup an area like this will definitely impact us by reducing work we can do on other Forest roads used by the Public."

Ranger Nelson also noted two other areas in which she is seeking improved cooperation

from the public. The first involves compliance with the firewood permit requirement that prohibits firewood cutting within 300 feet of a stream such as Panther Creek. Ranger Nelson commented that “this is a requirement that the Forest has agreed to in order to comply with terms of the Endangered Species Act. As such, we are subject to monitoring of this practice by other regulatory agencies. If it is determined that the Forest cannot ensure administration of this requirement the consequences may lead to a firewood program that is much less flexible than the existing program.”

The other area Ranger Nelson wanted to remind firewood cutters about is accountability. Personal-use firewood cutters are issued load tickets (tags) in $\frac{1}{4}$ cord increments when they purchase a permit. The proper amount must be attached to each load with the month and day completely notched. You must also record the amount of wood cut on the Product Quantity Removal Record of your permit before you leave the area. Ranger Nelson added that a commercial firewood permit is required in order to resell firewood that has been harvested from National Forest lands. A number of untagged trucks containing either personal use or commercial firewood have been observed hauling off the Forest or parked along Main Street.

Ranger Nelson concluded by commenting “I am encouraging members of my staff to make more contacts with firewood cutters. It is our responsibility to remind the Public of the terms and conditions contained in the firewood permit. It is the Publics responsibility to honor those requirements once they have signed the permit.” For more information about firewood permits please call your local Forest Service Office.

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