

NEWS RELEASE

US Forest Service

Pacific Southwest Region

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Forest Service Prepares for the 2008 Fire Season

VALLEJO, Calif., May 16, 2008 - The 2008 wildfire season has arrived in California and the US Forest Service is prepared with more than 4,000 firefighters statewide. Each year in California, the Forest Service increases their firefighting force by hiring more than 1,000 additional seasonal and temporary firefighters to assist during fire season.

“As the Region transitions into fire season, I am confident that we are well prepared to respond to wildfires in our national forests and to assist our firefighting partners in protecting local communities from wildfire,” said Pacific Southwest Regional Forester Randy Moore.

Currently, Forest Service firefighters are receiving their annual training and gearing up for the summer season. In many cases our firefighters have already responded to local fires or are traveling to assist with large fires elsewhere in the country including Florida and the Southwest. As in years past, as the fire season intensifies in California, more Forest Service firefighters will remain in state, and additional firefighting help will be brought into California from other regions, bolstering the Forest Service’s ability to quickly respond to wildfire.

Locally, the San Bernardino National Forest will staff 25 engines, four hotshot crews, four helicopters, and a bulldozer. The local Forest Service Air Tanker Base opened full operations as of April 28.

The Forest Service and its partners in California work closely together to respond to wildfires and protect our natural resources and communities. However, the most effective ways to prevent wildfires and protect communities is the result of responsible forest visitors and home owners. Forest visitors should always be aware of local fire restrictions and ensure that cigarettes, campfires, and other sources of ignition are properly extinguished and disposed of. Additionally, home owners can take steps to protect their homes by maintaining defensible space.

For more information regarding fire restrictions or defensible space, please contact the nearest US Forest Service Office or visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5>.

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