

# UTAH INTERAGENCY FIRE



**\*For Immediate Release\***

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## Recreate Responsibly on Utah Public Lands

**Salt Lake City, Utah**— With the increase in recreation throughout the summer months, land managers have observed increased misuse of public lands. Two issues that continue to plague Utah during this uptick in visitation are litter and human-caused fires (especially abandoned campfires). To help us better serve the public and conserve the land, we remind visitors to do their part to recreate responsibly.

Kyle Yurkovich, Fire Prevention Specialist with the US Forest Service, states “Many of our employees patrolling across Utah are finding a huge increase in abandoned campfires and human-caused fires from negligent behavior of forest visitors. The tall grasses and weeds deceptively green and are more flammable than they look. This gives a false sense of security when leaving a campsite or recreating on public land.”

### Fire Prevention

Utah experienced an unprecedented snowpack this winter, leading to a surge in the growth of fine fuels like grasses and shrubs. With hotter temperatures forecasted in the coming weeks, these fuels become prone to drying out rapidly, which poses a serious fire hazard. Even a simple spark can quickly spiral out of control and turn into a dangerous wildfire, especially when coupled with strong winds. Along with this potential fire threat, land managers have experienced growing numbers of abandoned campfires, misuse of equipment, improper safety measures when target shooting, and the use of illegal items on public lands.

Tips to eliminate human-caused wildfires:

- **Know Before You Go:** Check local fire restrictions before you recreate. Be aware of current weather and fuel conditions. Red Flag Warnings can contribute to extreme rapid fire growth.
- **Campfires:** Ensure you have a shovel and water source nearby. Keep fires at a manageable size. Never leave a fire unattended. Use the “Drown, Stir, Feel, and Repeat” method to extinguish campfires.
- **Equipment:** Be mindful of your surroundings. Take proper maintenance measures. Never park on or drive over dry vegetation. Ensure trailer chains don’t drag and OHVs have spark arresters.
- **Target shooting:** Avoid shooting rocks, metal, or pressurized containers. Shoot away from dry vegetation. Exploding targets, tracer ammunition, and fireworks are NEVER allowed on public lands.

## Litter and Vandalism

Improper waste disposal in outdoor spaces can have severe consequences, so cleaning up after yourself is crucial. Unfortunately, this summer, there has been increased vandalism and garbage left at popular locations such as campsites, campgrounds, trailheads, boat ramps, and parking lots in Utah's public lands. This causes additional issues and results in taxpayers' money being spent on cleanup and repairs. Our public lands and waterways are essential sources of our drinking water, and irresponsible actions like these can contaminate them. Additionally, trash can take a long time to break down, is harmful to wildlife, and is unsightly to other visitors. It is the users' responsibility to clean up before they leave.

Tips for minimizing your footprint on public lands:

- Pack it in/Pack it out. Inspect your campsite and recreation areas for trash or food. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. This is especially important for areas without dumpsters or garbage collection.
- Trash should not be burned and should never be left in fire rings.
- When recreating, carry a trash bag with you and pick up debris along the way.
- Always clean up after your pets. Bag and take the waste with you.
- Stop vandalism in its tracks. This includes graffiti and deliberate damage to signs, tables, gates, buildings, restrooms, trails, and natural features.
- The best rule of thumb.... leave areas better than you found them (the way you want to find your recreation sites)

It takes more than checklists to protect our lands. It takes each person doing their part to help maintain healthy and clean lands, keep wildlife strong, and ensure everyone is welcome to enjoy these remarkable places together. No matter where or why you get outside, it's your land to protect.

Yurkovich states "We encourage outdoor enthusiasts of all types to consider the impacts they leave behind, which affect other people, our water, wildlife, and future usage of public lands. Please help us keep our public lands safe, clean, and beautiful."

For more information on preventing unwanted human-caused wildfires, fire restrictions, and maps, visit [www.utahfiresense.org](http://www.utahfiresense.org) and [www.utahfireinfo.gov](http://www.utahfireinfo.gov) or on our social channels [@UtahWildfire](https://twitter.com/UtahWildfire).

For recreation tips on how to maintain clean campgrounds recreation sites and to avoid leaving a trace, visit: <https://treadlightly.org/learn/recreation-tips/camping/> or <https://Int.org/why/7-principles/>.

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