

# Drone (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) Use on National Forest Lands & the Protection of Wildlife

---

## Forest Service Unmanned Aircraft Systems Use Policy

Individuals and organizations that fly UAS for hobby or recreational purposes may not operate them in areas of National Forest System lands that have [Temporary Flight Restrictions \(TFRs\)](#) in place, such as wildfires, without prior approval from the U.S. Forest Service.

The FAA provides [guidance](#) on “Flights Over Charted U.S. Wildlife Refuges, Parks, and Forest Service Areas”. Per this guidance, federal laws prohibit certain types of flight activity and/or provide altitude restrictions over “designated Forest Service Areas.” Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are considered to be “mechanized” equipment and cannot take off and land in designated [Wilderness](#) on National Forest System lands.

## *Protect Wildlife & the Environment*



- Do not fly over congressionally designated Wilderness or Primitive areas as many people seek these places for the opportunities for solitude and quiet that they provide.
- Do not fly over or near wildlife as this can create stress that may cause significant harm, and even death.
- Pursuit, harassment, or an intentional disturbance of animals during breeding, nesting, rearing of young, or other critical life history functions is prohibited unless legally approved as research or management.
- Follow state wildlife and fish agency regulations on the use of UAS to search for or detect wildlife and fish.
- Launch the UAS more than 100 meters (328 feet) from wildlife. Do not approach animals or birds vertically with the UAS.
- Birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and bald eagles are also protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act which, among restrictions for causing harm, also prohibits harassment and disturbance of bald and golden eagles.

See this website for additional information: <http://www.fs.fed.us/science-technology/fire/unmanned-aircraft-systems/responsible-use>.



**for the greatest good**