

Dispersed Camping

Stanislaus National Forest

ROG 16-03; 02/05



Dispersed camping occurs in less-developed areas where no services are offered. There are no picnic tables, metal fire rings or garbage service. Also, there are no designated camping or parking areas provided. The maximum length of stay in a Forest Ranger District is 21 days per year. Visitors should plan ahead in order to remember to bring any items they might need during their stay. We want you to enjoy the Stanislaus National Forest. We ask that all visitors, including those who disperse camp, remember good outdoor ethics about camping, travel and behavior—and practice them while they are visiting.

Dispersed camping is not allowed in the following areas:

- within a mile of Pinecrest Basin;
- along the Clark Fork Road (7N83);
- along Hwy 108 between the Clark Fork Road and the Kennedy Meadows Road.

Campsites

Use existing campsites in lieu of clearing new sites. Although it's natural for campers to want to stay near water sources, camping at least 100 feet away from edges of meadows, lakes streams or rivers helps minimize damage to critical wildlife and riparian areas.

Soil compaction is another problem area where campers can lend a hand. Creek beds are not trails but they can and do serve as valuable guides for navigating. Nonetheless, use existing trails instead of breaking new ones or compacting creek beds.

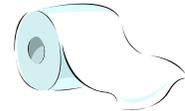
Keep a clean, neat campsite. Secure food—preferably in airtight containers. If food is left out, bears and other wildlife will seek it out and eat it. Actually, this is true of anything with an odor—toothpaste, the shirt you wore to cook breakfast—it is all food to the animals if it has a scent. (Any item with an odor is a potential food source for a wild animal.) You can store your food in the car providing it can't be seen or its odor detected.

Although there is always the old method of hanging your food cache from a tree limb, more and more outdoor enthusiasts are relying on bear-proof canisters to protect their food supplies. You can purchase them at most outdoor gear stores. They are lightweight and protect whatever's inside very effectively. Although the cost isn't necessarily cheap, your vacation will be short-lived if the bears get to your food cache at the beginning of your stay.

Managing Camping “By-Products”

Campers are encouraged to pack it in—pack it out. Taking out more than you brought is even better, in that it helps greatly reduce recreational impacts on the Forest. Litter and garbage are unsightly and unsanitary. They are also harmful to wildlife and fish populations. Clean dishes at least 100 feet away from water sources. Place food scraps either in a closed container (to take with you when departing) or dispose of them in an area that does not invite wild animals. Proper human waste disposal is critically important. Keep all waste products at least 100 feet away from water sources.

Dig shallow “cat” holes (6” deep) to bury waste and toilet paper. Do not attempt to burn your paper.



Campfires

Before you depart for your trip to the Stanislaus, check ahead of time with appropriate fire officials (or Forest Service personnel) to learn whether the area you plan to visit has any campfire restrictions.

You will need a campfire permit even if seasonal restrictions are not in effect. Use common sense when it comes to campfires and carefully follow the instructions on the permit:

- Campfires should never be so large as to singe or burn overhead vegetation or throw off sparks.
- Campfires should be contained within rock fire rings.
- Use existing fire rings. Doing so will reduce the number of excess sites that have to be dismantled. A surplus of fire rings causes a messy, dirty problem for the Forest and damages valuable land.
- Campfires should be surrounded by an area of 5' clearance in all directions, cleared to the soil.



Never leave campfires unattended—for any reason. Campfire permits require a shovel and water nearby for putting out fires. Make sure the fire is dead out by drowning with water, stirring with shovel and feeling for heat with hands.

Travel and Access

All motorized vehicles using Forest roads must be registered with California's DMV either as street-legal (i.e., meets requirements necessary for operation on a public thoroughfare) or as a “green sticker” vehicle (e.g., OHVs such as dirt bikes, ATVs, dune buggies and snowmobiles—which meet emission standards). Most dirt roads in the Forest are maintained in a roughly graded condition.

Except for snowmobiles, “green-sticker vehicles” are restricted to these types of roads and some gravel roads. Ranger Districts have maps that illustrate permissible areas for OHV use—and they’re free.

Visitors should always consult road signs on Forest roads to fully confirm what vehicle use is allowed on a given road. Not all traveled ways are open to the public. Some Forest roads are gated or blocked by obstacles such as boulders, logs or dirt piles. Other areas may appear to have been roads at one time but show no signs of recent travel. Many of these “roads” are old logging skid trails and were never intended for vehicle use. They may or may not be designated trails. As a rule of thumb, if a route is not designated “closed” by sign or other obvious intent to bar use by vehicles, the visitor should assume the route is open for use.

Dry meadows can often seem inviting to cross with an OHV. Doing so creates heavy resource damage. For the same reason, drivers should avoid driving over grasses, brush, trees or any other vegetation. Driving in wet areas is never acceptable, except for designated stream crossings on approved roads.

Remember—each pass of a tire over wet terrain defines again the unwanted track, sending a false message to others that vehicular travel in that area is permitted. This translates into more resource damage in areas where there should be none.

Horse Users

Visitors who ride are requested to tie off their stock to a hitch line extended between trees. In this way, animals aren’t next to trees where they can scrape off bark, step on brush/native vegetation or compact soil around the tree’s base. Use hemp or cotton rope to tie off stock. Plastic rope can cause hide burns on the animal and damage to the tree’s bark.

Other measures can serve to limit resource impacts. Horse riders should bring hay pellets/cubes or grain for feed. The natural feed available within the Forest varies from location to location. If you do bring hay, we suggest that it be free of weed seed.

Such careful selection of feed helps to control the unwanted spread of non-native plants to the Forest. Finally, keep moving stakes or tie lines so that animals do not overgraze a given area.



Scatter stock waste so that it has a better chance to dry. Do not pile waste or push it into natural drainage areas where it can run into water sources and cause pollution.

If you have any questions about dispersed camping or any other subject that you need addressed before your visit, please call either the Forest Supervisor’s office or the appropriate office of the Ranger District closest to the area you plan to visit:

Stanislaus National Forest

19777 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 532-3671
TDD: (209) 533-0765

Mi-Wok Ranger District

24695 Hwy 108
PO Box 100
Mi Wuk Village, CA 95346
(209) 586-3234
TDD: (209) 586-0262

Calaveras Ranger District

5519 Hwy 4
PO Box 500
Hathaway Pines, CA 95323
(209) 795-1381
TDD: (209) 795-2854

Summit Ranger District

#1 Pinecrest Lake Road
Pinecrest, CA 95364
(209) 965-3434
TDD: (209) 965-0488

Groveland Ranger District

24545 Hwy 120
Groveland, CA 95321
(209) 962-7825
TDD: (209) 962-6406

