



**U.S. Forest Service
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
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News Release

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Arizona State Highways 261 & 273 opening April 12

Springerville, AZ; April 4, 2018—Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) plans to open State Highways 261 and 273 on Thursday April 12. The roads were closed during winter months for public safety. Opening the State Highways provides access to Big Lake, Crescent and Sunrise Lakes. If there is a snow storm after the gates are opened on these two highways, ADOT will not plow them. Both of these highways are classified as secondary highways since they do not have the volume of traffic other main highways have in the area.

Most Forest Service roads are open at this time but may still be impassable, due to snow drifts or wet/muddy conditions. The U.S. Forest Service does not maintain or plow roads during the winter months.

While access is available onto the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs), land managers remind visitors that early spring conditions can be muddy, boggy, or wet. Do not cause damage by driving on, around, or through these areas. While mud bogging or “mudding” may look like fun to some, it leaves behind scars on the land and frequently causes long-term resource damage, erosion issues, and is very expensive to repair. Not only is mud bogging extremely damaging to the land, but it is also illegal. It is unlawful to operate a vehicle on or off-road in a manner which damages or unreasonably disturbs land and vegetation. These actions could result in an arrest, a fine, and restitution if convicted.

Safety is also a concern to the ASNFs. Becoming stuck and unprepared for a long hike out or an overnight stay in the mountains can be very unpleasant. The ASNFs want

forest users to enjoy their public lands. Responsible use of forest roads and trails not only avoids damage to the resources but also provides quality access opportunities for others.

When recreating on the forests, you should be prepared by bringing plenty of water, food, and warm clothing, and **always** let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return. The White Mountains have experienced an unusually dry and warm winter, and all it takes is one spark to start a wildfire. Please come prepared with a shovel and water, drown, stir, and drown your campfire again until it is cold to the touch.

Drivers are also encouraged to call 5-1-1 or log on to ADOT's Traveler Information Center at www.az511.gov for the latest highway conditions around the state.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests can be reached at (928) 333-6280, or on our website at www.fs.usda.gov/asnf

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