UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
SOUTHERN REGION

Order Number 08-RO-00-19-021

Two-Year Closure of
All Caves and Abandoned Underground Mines
on National Forest System Lands

Pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50 (a) and (b), the following acts are prohibited within all National Forests that are administered by the Southern Region, excluding El Yunque National Forest in Puerto Rico and caves with entrances completely under water. This closure is effective for a period of two years from the date of signature, unless terminated earlier by the Regional Forester.

1. **Entering any cave or abandoned underground mine, regardless of distance or depth, located on National Forest System Lands in the Southern Region. 36 C.F.R. § 261.53 (a), (b), and (d).**

   The term "cave" means any naturally occurring void, cavity, recess, or system of interconnected passages which occurs beneath the surface of the earth or within a cliff or ledge (including any cave resource therein, but not including any vug, mine, tunnel, aqueduct, or other manmade excavation) and which is large enough to permit an individual to enter, whether or not the entrance is naturally formed or manmade. Such term shall include any natural pit, sinkhole, or other feature which is an extension of the entrance (Federal Cave Resources Protection Act 16 U.S.C. § 4302).

   Note: The above prohibition does not apply to Blanchard Springs Caverns on the Ozark St. Francis National Forest in Arkansas.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50 (e), the following persons are exempted from this order:

1. Persons with written authorization by a Forest Service Officer specifically authorizing an otherwise prohibited act or omission.

2. Any Federal, State or local officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force working in the performance of an official duty.

Executed in Atlanta, Georgia this 14 day of June, 2019.

KEN ARNEY
Regional Forester
Southern Region

Violation of these prohibitions set forth above is punishable by a fine of not more than $5,000 for an individual and $10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, or both. See 16 U.S.C. 551, 18 U.S.C. 3559 and 3571.