



USDA Forest Service San Juan National Forest Dispersed Camping Regulations and Guidelines

Camping in areas that are outside of campgrounds is allowed per the regulations listed below. In heavily used areas, dispersed campsites may be identified with signs and may have some facilities, such as in the following locations:

- La Plata Canyon (12 miles west of Durango, right turn off Highway 160)
- South Mineral Road (2 miles north of Silverton, left turn off Highway 550)

Campsite Selection:

Look for an area that has already been impacted to avoid further damaging vegetation. Falling trees are always a hazard when traveling through the forest. Place tents and park vehicles in areas where they will not be hit if a tree falls.

Regulations:

- You may drive up to 300 feet off an open road to access a campsite unless otherwise signed, and if you can do so without causing damage to soils or vegetation.
- Camp at least 100 feet from any source of water within wilderness areas. Check Wilderness regulations for site specific closures.
- Any area signed as "No Camping" means just that.
- MVUM's (Motor Vehicle Use Maps) are also a good information source for stretches of roads on National Forests that allow dispersed camping from a vehicle.
- Do not damage vegetation. Do not cut green trees, break off limbs, drive nails into or damage the bark of trees.
- Do not level a site or dig trenches, rather pick a site with good drainage.
- Do not cut live trees for any purpose including tent poles, hanging racks, and clearing ground.
- Building permanent structures is prohibited. When you leave, dismantle all structures including game poles. Pack out all non-native materials.
- Respect private landowners and don't trespass on private property.

Store Food and Trash Properly:

It is in the best interest of all to protect bears and other critters from your food and garbage. Black bears can do a lot of damage to your belongings, and if a bear is desensitized to humans by your behavior, it may be destroyed.

- Never feed wildlife or encourage them to be unafraid of people.
- Keep and leave a clear campsite. Do not use your campfire ring as a trash can and do not burn trash.
- Be "Bear Aware" and use smart food storage techniques in bear country. To be effective, food, containers and packaging, cooking utensils, garbage, pet food and bird feeders must be stored in a bear-resistant manner. Approved bear-safe storage methods include:

- Inside a hard-sided vehicle or camper.
- Hung at least ten feet off the ground, and four feet from the trunk of a tree.
- Inside an approved bear-resistant container designed to keep bears out.
- **Remove your Trash from the Forest:** The trash (fee) transfer station is the building directly north of the San Juan Public Lands Center at 790 Tech Center Dr, Durango, CO 81301. For operator hours and information, call 970-259-2915.

Be Careful with Fire

Southwest Colorado is arid country that can be dangerously dry, especially in the summer and fall. Be very careful with fire – a spark, a gust of wind and nearby flammable materials can combine to cause a disaster.

- Always check fire restrictions posted at Forest entrances signs, campgrounds, trail heads and along roads or at a Forest office.
- A firewood permit is not required to gather firewood for use in your camp on the national forest. Firewood permits are required if you plan to remove the wood from the national forest.
- Be sure you locate your fire in an area that prevents fire spread laterally or vertically. Select a location that is free of flammable vegetation.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Put it out completely every time you leave camp. Pour water on the fire and stir the ashes until cold. Embers buried deep within the pile may reignite later.
- Do not burn trash. Some items, when burned are harmful to the environment. Plastics and tin do not burn to ash. The resulting debris is trash.
- Where a grate is provided, use it.
- Consider using a camping stove instead of building a fire.
- Do not park over dry grass.
- Extinguish and dispose of cigarette butts safely.

Length of Stay:

Recreational camping is limited to 14 consecutive days in the same location. After the 14 days, campers must move at least 3 air miles away. For recreational camping, there is a limit of a total of 28 days on the San Juan National Forest in a continuous 60 day period. Living on the forest (residential use) is prohibited.

Sanitation:

Do not bathe with soap or wash your dishes or clothing in streams or lakes. Dig a 6-8 inch “cat hole” for human waste. If there are several people in your camp, dig a latrine. Locate latrines far from any water source. Fill latrines, dismantle structures and pack out seats, buckets, plastic and other non-native materials when you leave.