



**Forest Order No. STF-16-2020-17  
Stanislaus National Forest  
COVID-19 Public Health and Safety  
Developed Recreation Site Closure**

Pursuant to 16 USC 551 and 36 CFR 261.50(a), and to provide for public safety, the following act is prohibited within the Stanislaus National Forest. This Order is effective from July 16, 2020, through August 30, 2020.

Entering or using a Developed Recreation Site listed in Exhibit A. 36 CFR 261.58(b).

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

1. Any Federal, State, or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of an official duty.
2. Persons with Forest Service Permit No. FS-7700-48 (Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order), specifically exempting them from this Order.

This prohibition is in addition to the general prohibitions contained in 36 CFR Part 261, Subpart A.

A violation of this prohibition is punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment for not more than 6 months, or both. 16 USC 551 and 18 USC 3559, 3571, and 3581.

Executed in Sonora, CA, this 20th day of July, 2020.

Jason Kuiken  
Forest Supervisor  
Stanislaus National Forest



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Service

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**Subject:** Forest Order No. STF-16-2020-17, COVID-19 Public Health & Safety Developed Recreation Site Closure

**To:** Project Files

**From:** Jason Kuiken, Forest Supervisor

I am issuing Forest Order No. STF-16-2020-17 to provide for public and employee health and safety by keeping some Developed Recreation Sites on the Stanislaus National Forest (STF) closed through August 30, 2020. This closure may be terminated or extended depending upon conditions. This order is a continuation of STF-16-2020-16 issued July 1, 2020, closing certain Developed Recreation Sites on the STF.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infection and potentially fatal disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus which leads to respiratory illness. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. As of July 14, 2020, the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported a total of 3,416,428 cases of COVID-19 nationwide (up from 2,564,163 since June 28, 2020) with 355,000 cases in California (up from 211,000 since June 28, 2020). There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. As a result, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

On May 7, 2020, California's Public Health Officer issued an order explaining California's path forward from the earlier "Stay-at-Home" Order through implementation of its Pandemic Roadmap, a four staged approach. Each of the four counties within the STF remains in late Stage 2 and in alignment with the state guidelines for recreational activities. As of June 12, 2020, the State of California issued guidance for re-opening additional sectors – including camping and short term lodging, with required mitigation. Local Counties continue to be aligned with updated State guidance.

In addition to the state and local orders, the USDA, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region issued Regional Order No. 20-03 on March 27, 2020, effective through May 15, 2020. This order extended the previous closure of recreation sites (campgrounds, picnic areas, day use sites, etc.) while the State Order (N-33-20) is in effect in an effort to protect public and employee health and safety, along with natural and cultural resources by prohibiting people from visiting and using Developed Recreation Sites. Many of these sites draw large numbers of people and require significant management oversight, especially during the high-use conditions now being realized. This management burden put Forest personnel at additional risk of exposure to COVID-19.



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When the Regional Order (20-03) expired, flexibility was provided to the local Line Officer to determine whether or not recreation site closures are needed. As such, STF staff have developed a phased re-opening plan for Developed Recreation Sites. Some sites – where historic use has not resulted in large crowds and where limited service can be safely provided – have been open for use since May 16, 2020. As other pre-season safety work (abatement of hazard trees, for example) was completed, additional sites have been opened and are available for public use where required personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies are available and employee safety can be realized. Operationally, the visiting public will notice less Agency presence and limited services. Information boards and other messaging will remind visitors to recreate responsibly during this pandemic. This will include social distancing, providing their own water, packing out all their trash, and bringing their own toilet paper.

At this time, the majority of developed recreation sites on the STF are open. Those sites that will continue to remain closed (including all group campgrounds) are included in the Developed Recreation Site Forest Closure as Exhibit A.

Other local STF Forest Orders previously issued in response to COVID-19 include STF-16-2020-01, COVID-19 Public Health and Safety Road and Area Closure (expired 04/30/2020) and Forest Order STF-16-2020-02, which was a continuation of STF-16-2020-01, and was terminated on May 2, 2020. This termination allowed visitors to disperse on National Forest system lands to engage in the lower-risk recreation activities of hiking, fishing, driving. By providing more access, the forest is hoping to prevent large group gatherings in smaller, more congested developed sites.

The STF is a Sierran foothill forest which lies within rural communities. A next door neighbor to Yosemite National Park, the STF serves as a highly sought out destination landscape offering a multitude of recreation opportunities with most visitors coming from the Central Valley and the Bay Area, current ‘hotspots’ of the coronavirus. Typically, the STF and local counties welcome visitors / recreationists as tourism is the economic driver for the local area. With COVID-19, however, we join our local partners in their concern regarding the potential for a large outbreak of COVID-19 and our ability to successfully respond as rural communities.

Our rural communities have limited medical facilities (small hospitals / clinics), with limited equipment (ventilators). Personal protective equipment for frontline hospital staff (masks, gowns and gloves) are already in short supply.

In consideration of the above listed concerns, I have decided to keep selected Developed Recreation Sites on the STF closed. This will continue to support our community partners in managing out-of-area visitation during the ongoing national health crisis.

In preparing this order, the following entities have been contacted or have otherwise (in writing) offered their support of this action: Tuolumne County Administrator’s Office / Office of Emergency Services; Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors; Public Health Officials from each County; Tuolumne County Sheriff’s Office; Sonora Police Department; California Highway Patrol; Calaveras County Sheriff’s Office; and Caltrans. The STF participates in conference calls / meetings taking place three times a week that include the entities above, as well as the following: Tuolumne Band of Me Wuk; Tuolumne County Schools; CALFIRE; Sonora City

Fire, the Bureau of Reclamation and others. In addition, staff contacts with STF permittees (resorts, permitted water providers, for example) have indicated support to help minimize out-of-area visitation until corresponding shelter in place orders are lifted. Finally, a Joint Information Center (JIC) has been stood up in Tuolumne County to provide consistent, real time informational and educational messaging to visitors regarding the need to honor the shelter in place in your home community until conditions change. The JIC can be reached at (209) 533-7440.

There has been some objection to the necessity of closing high-use Developed Recreation Sites by individuals anxious to come to the Stanislaus for their planned recreation outings. Most of the large Developed Recreation Sites on the STF are managed by concessionaires operating under a Special Use Permit. With permittees and local partners, efforts to jointly message minimizing non-essential travel and to proactively warn visitors of crowded conditions are ongoing. In partnership with Caltrans, messaging to out-of-county visitors regarding the status of available parking at Pinecrest Lake – the single most visited area on the STF – is occurring on multiple electronic sign boards as visitors come up to the foothills from valley locations.

This Forest Order includes an exemption for persons with a Forest Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order (Form FS-7700-48). Authorization for entry under this exemption will only be provided if I or my delegate determine that the risk to personal health and safety is reasonable considering the circumstances of the request. We may also require appropriate personal protective equipment and other necessary safety measures. I hereby delegate the authority to sign Form FS-700-48 granting an exemption to this Forest Order to all District Rangers on the Stanislaus National Forest.

This order will be in effect until August 30, 2020 and may be extended as conditions warrant. Conversely, if conditions change that are favorable to opening additional Developed Recreation Sites, the order may be terminated sooner.

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act. This action falls within the category identified in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(1) – prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety – and does not require documentation in a decision memo, decision notice, or record of decision. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this temporary closure. Implementation of the decision may begin immediately.

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**Exhibit A: Closed Sites**

Beardsley Dam Campground  
Big Meadow Group Campground  
Cascade Creek Campground  
Clark Fork Horse Camp  
Eagle Meadow Horse Camp  
Fence Creek Campground  
Herring Creek Campground  
Herring Reservoir Campground  
Kerrick Corral Horse Camp  
Lodgepole Group Campground  
Lodgepole Overflow Campground  
Lumsden Bridge Campground (Road damage)  
Mill Creek Campground  
Moore Creek Campground  
Niagara Creek Campground  
Niagara Off Highway Vehicle Campground  
Pine Valley Horse Camp  
Pioneer Trail Group Campground  
Spicer Group Campground  
TeleLi puLaya Campground