



---

**File Code:** 5330**Date:** September 7, 2020**Route To:****Subject:** Regional Order 20-09**To:** File

I have decided to issue Forest Order No. 20-09 to prohibit dispersed camping on the Eldorado National Forest, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Lassen National Forest, Plumas National Forest, and Tahoe National Forest. This Regional Order will be in effect from September 8, 2020, through September 14, 2020. This Order provides for the safety of forest visitors by preventing them from getting trapped on National Forest System lands during emergency circumstances.

California is experiencing an unprecedented and dire fire season. There are 18 National Forests in California, totaling approximately 20 million acres. Currently, 13 of 18 National Forests in the Pacific Southwest Region in California have large fires. Nearly all fires are now large, “complex” fires (a series of fires in close proximity to one another that have burned into a single large unit). In a typical fire season, California will see some 300,000 acres burn. This year, more than 1.8 million acres have already burned statewide.

Nationally, and within California, firefighting units are operating at maximum capacity and there are significant shortages of resources. Our firefighting organization has been in Preparedness Level 5 (PL5), the highest level of fire response preparedness, for several weeks. Nationally there are no Type 1 Incident Management Teams available and only two Type 2 teams available. All fire engines and major firefighting equipment are already assigned to existing fires or positioned to prevent new fire starts from escaping initial attack.

The National Forest units identified above have experienced significantly increased levels of dispersed camping, including an increase in illegal campfires. The potential for new fires to start and burn uncontrollably is extremely high right now. The combination of extreme fire conditions and weather, along with significant shortages in firefighting resources, poses a significant threat to communities and the visiting public. Should a fire start, dispersed campers would be at a high risk of injury or death from extreme fire behavior. The Forest Service would have no way of contacting these visitors and does not have the personnel at the moment to conduct evacuations of dispersed forest areas.

This Order will provide for the safety of forest visitors by temporary limiting the number of national forest visitors potentially subject to harm from wildfire. This Order compliments Regional Order 20-6, which prohibits building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, or stove fire, or smoking on National Forest System lands within the Pacific Southwest Region,



and provides for the safety of forest visitors by mitigating wildfire ignition potential during extreme fire conditions.

This Order allows camping in Wilderness Areas and within 500 feet of the Pacific Crest Trail. These locations are generally higher in elevation and less susceptible to fire danger. In addition, users of the Pacific Crest Trail carry permits and are more easily tracked in the event of an emergency evacuation.

A Forest Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order (Form FS-7700-48), granting an exemption to this Regional Order, 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. I hereby delegate the authority to sign and issue Form FS-7700-48 to the Forest Supervisors of the Eldorado National Forest, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, Lassen National Forest, Plumas National Forest, and Tahoe National Forest.

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 after I issue this Order.

X 

---

Signed by: RANDY MOORE

RANDY MOORE  
Regional Forester Pacific Southwest Region

Enclosure – Regional Order No. 20-09