



**National Forests in North
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News Release

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Forest Service Temporarily Halts Target Shooting on Croatan National Forest Due to Public Safety Concerns

New Bern, N.C., July 10, 2015 – U.S. Forest Service officials announced today that an [emergency closure order](#), effective July 13, 2015, prohibiting target shooting on the Croatan National Forest has been issued to protect public safety and prevent natural resource damage. The order will be in effect for 120 days. The order does not limit lawful hunting activities on the forest.

“The resource damage, and more importantly, the public and employee safety hazard posed by the significant uptick in firearm use on the Croatan led us to this point,” said Jim Gumm, Croatan District Ranger. “Shooting sports are an entirely appropriate use of Forest Service land but we have to make sure it can be done safely and without having a negative effect on other resources.”

Over the past year, the Forest Service has responded to hundreds of complaints from citizens and responded to dozens of incidents involving target shooting on the forest. Additionally, natural resource damage from the targeting of trees and other vegetation has increased significantly across the forest.

Earlier this year, the Forest Service launched a study to identify potential locations for construction of a new developed target range (none exist on the Croatan). Additionally, Forest Service officials have been meeting with local military installation leaders and other community organizations and leaders to raise awareness about the issue.

During the closure period, the Forest Service is soliciting feedback from community members on the emergency closure order and is asking for ideas on how to address the safety issues associated with target shooting, long-term, in order to preserve the popular recreation activity for future visitors to the Croatan. Interested citizens can send comments to: croatantargetshooting@fs.fed.us. Additionally, Forest Service officials will be hosting public meetings and conducting additional outreach to community leaders, and shooting sports stakeholders to inform future decision-making on this important issue.

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Trees felled by target shooters on the Croatan National Forest (Melonas/USFS)