

ORDER NO. 04-10-07

INYO NATIONAL FOREST
ANSEL ADAMS AND JOHN MUIR WILDERNESS AREAS
CAMPFIRE RESTRICTIONS
Administrative Record

I have made the decision to renew the restrictions on campfires in the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses as described in Forest Order No. 04-10-07. My decision is based upon the *2001 Wilderness Management Plan for the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses*, the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses*; the *Record of Decision for Management Direction for the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses*, the Order for Injunctive Relief issued in *High Sierra Hikers Ass'n., et al. v. Randy Moore, et al.*, and the explanation and justification provided in this administrative record. The circumstances upon which these management decisions were based remain unchanged and, as a result, the need for these restrictions continues.

The purpose of this Forest Order is to protect natural resources and wilderness values established by the 1964 Wilderness Act within the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses. The prohibition against campfires in whitebark pine forests and certain other areas is needed to prevent the further depletion of downed wood and ground litter, which are essential to ecosystem processes in alpine environments. The objective of the Order is to prevent wilderness visitors from continuing to deplete wood resources in wilderness.

Background

The *2001 Wilderness Management Plan for the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses*' (2001 Plan) management direction pertaining to campfires in wilderness includes the following elements (2001 Plan, pgs. 15-16):

1. Prohibit wood campfires in areas above 10,000-foot elevation in the northern portion of the planning area and 10,400 feet in the southern portion.
2. Continue existing closures to wood campfires. In the Cottonwood Basin, however, the elevational restriction will change from 10,300 feet to 10,400 feet.
3. Permit gas, propane, and multi-fuel stoves and heaters in areas closed to wood campfires.
4. Prohibit wood burning stoves, charcoal fires, packed in firewood, or fire pans within areas closed to wood campfires.
5. Close other areas to wood campfires, as needed using the campsite monitoring protocol rating system.

Campfire restrictions Based on Elevation

The *Record of Decision for Management Direction for the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses* (2001 ROD) indicates the Forest selected the elevation-based restrictions based upon the best estimation of the elevation of the whitebark pine forest. The Record referenced scientific literature that supports the need for campfire restrictions in pure whitebark pine stands. The Record also indicated the Forest will implement the elevational and site specific campfire restrictions through Forest Orders (2001 ROD, pg. 35). The Forest began

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implementing the elevational restrictions through a Forest Order in 2002. During two recent years, the Forest Supervisor issued Forest Orders that prohibited campfires at lower elevations than the 2001 Plan's elevation-based restrictions due to the severe danger of wildfire during drought conditions. The elevational boundaries in the text of the Forest Order and in Exhibits C and D conform to the 2001 Plan's management direction on campfires (2001 Plan, pg. 15).

Site Specific Campfire Restrictions

The existing restrictions described in Background, No. 2, above, referenced 14 site-specific areas within the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses where campfires have been prohibited since 1996 by Forest Order 04-96-02. Eight of the 14 site-specific areas are at elevations above the 2001 Plan's elevational restrictions, and these eight areas are now closed to campfires by the 2001 Plan's management direction. The remaining six site-specific areas in the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses have remained closed to campfires:

1. Ansel Adams Wilderness
 - a. Garnet Lake and Thousand Island Lake outlets
 - b. Ediza Lake, Minaret Lakes, Shadow Creek and Shadow Lake

2. John Muir Wilderness
 - a. North and South Fork Big Pine Creek
 - b. Anvil Camp area
 - c. Onion Valley area
 - d. In the Mt. Whitney area: Lone Pine Creek, North Fork Lone Pine Creek and Meysan Creek.

The four areas within the John Muir Wilderness above are included in the areas where campfires will be prohibited by Order 04-10-07. The two campfire prohibition areas within the Ansel Adams Wilderness will be affected by the Order for Injunctive Relief as discussed below.

2001 Plan Environmental Analysis

The *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses* (FEIS) indicated the site specific closures had been implemented to respond to impacts caused by high use, the concentration of campsites, and high elevation ecological conditions (FEIS pg3-21). The impacts were caused by visitors' burning so much of the available woody material and forest duff that nutrient cycling and the role of soil organisms were affected. The impacts were especially adverse in the high elevation whitebark pine and foxtail pine forests. These species have very slow rates of growth and decomposing wood from the trees is essential to nutrient cycling and soil development.

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Order For Injunctive Relief No. C-00-01239 EDL

The May 8, 2008 Order For Injunctive Relief by the United States District Court for the Northern District of California indicated the following provisions regarding campfires in the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wilderness shall be in force:

- a. The Forest Service shall implement the 10,000 ft./10,400 ft. elevational campfire restrictions set forth in the 2001 Plan and prohibit exceptions to those elevational closures. Where a destination straddles the closure line, the collection of wood below the line for use above the line shall be prohibited.
- b. The Forest Service shall prohibit the packing in or use of wood or any other solid fuel in areas closed to campfires.
- c. In addition to the elevational closures set forth above, the Forest Service shall implement additional site-specific campfire closures in accordance with the criteria set out the 2001 Plan. Specifically:
 - (1) Where 50% or more of campsite in an area otherwise open to campfires are rated at "4" or "5" for wood availability, fires shall be prohibited in those areas.

The Forest completed campsite surveys in areas currently open to campfires in November, 2009. Based upon recommendations by the District Ranger for the Mammoth Lakes and Mono Lake Ranger Districts and the Deputy District Ranger for the White Mountain and Mount Whitney Ranger Districts, the Forest Supervisor has determined that 14 additional areas will be closed to campfires and two areas currently closed to campfires will be expanded in size because these areas have been rated a "4" or "5" for firewood availability using the 2001 Plan's monitoring protocol:

- A. In the Ansel Adams Wilderness, portions of the:
 1. Bloody Canyon Drainage
 2. Parker Canyon Drainage
 3. Rush Creek area
 4. Thousand Island Lake and Garnet Lake closure areas have been expanded in size from the 1996 closure areas
 5. Shadow Lake and Minaret Lake closure areas have been expanded in size from the 1996 closure areas
 6. King Creek Drainage
- B. In the John Muir Wilderness, portions of the:
 1. Coldwater Drainage
 2. Duck Creek Drainage
 3. Purple lake area

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4. Upper Fish Creek Drainage
5. Convict Creek Drainage
6. McGee Creek Drainage
7. Hilton Lakes Drainage
8. Pine Lake area
9. Lower Horton Lake area
10. Taboose Creek Drainage

The Court's direction that the Forest evaluate firewood availability indicates the underlying need to prohibit campfires at high elevation locations in the Ansel Adams and John Muir where wood has become depleted has not changed since 2001. The prohibition against campfires in higher elevations of the wilderness and areas where the amount of visitation is depleting woody material is needed to protect the natural quality of wilderness from adverse impacts.

Prepared by Jeff Novak,
Wilderness Manager
Inyo National Forest
July 13, 2010

Approved by:



JIM UPCHURCH
Inyo National Forest Supervisor

Done in Bishop, California, this 2nd day of August, 2010.