

National Forests in Alabama

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News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PUBLIC RESTRICTIONS PUT IN PLACE BY THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE DUE TO HIGH WILDLAND FIRE DANGER

Montgomery, AL (March 27, 2007) ----- The U.S. Forest Service is alerting all forest users to be aware of specific public-use restrictions placed on the Bankhead and Talladega National Forests located in Alabama. Due to the extreme dry conditions and lack of rainfall, Forest Service officials are reminding the public to practice fire safety while visiting the National Forests in Alabama. Restrictions involve the non-use of fire or campfires outside of designated campsites, developed campgrounds, and in any location of a forest without developed recreation sites. **The following public restrictions were effective on March 22, 2007 and will remain in effect until May 15, 2007:**

Bankhead National Forest – Bankhead District

- The Bankhead Ranger District is prohibiting the building, maintaining, attending, and using a fire or campfire outside a developed campground on the Bankhead National Forest – Bankhead Ranger District of the National Forests in Alabama. The use of gas generated fire in a Coleman-type or backpacking stove will be allowed throughout the Bankhead National Forest. 6 CFR 261.52 (a)
- Anyone violating a state law concerning burning or fires that are implemented for the purpose of preventing or restricting the spread of fires. 36 CFR 261.52 (k)

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Talladega National Forest – Talladega, Shoal Creek, and Oakmulgee Districts

- The building, maintaining, attending, using a fire or campfire not in a designated campsite are prohibited on the Talladega National Forest – Talladega, Oakmulgee, and Shoal Creek Districts of the National Forests in Alabama. The use of gas generated fire in a Coleman-type or backpacking stove will be allowed throughout the Talladega National Forest. 36 CFR 261.52 (a)
- Anyone violating a state law concerning burning or fires that are implemented for the purpose of preventing or restricting the spread of fires. 36 CFR 261.52 (k)

According to Greg Born, fire management officer for the National Forests in Alabama, anyone found violating any of these prohibitions might face a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization or imprisonment for not more than six months or both.

Those who are exempt from these restrictions will be any federal, state, or local officer or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting team or those holding a permit specifically authorizing the use of fire.

“The majority of wildfires in national forests are caused by people,” said Born.

“We are asking everyone to use extreme caution when starting campfires, discarding cigarettes, driving or visiting the forests.”

Fire officials advise that before planning to spend a few days in the national forest, you should look for changes in restrictions, which could change according to fire weather conditions.

Last year, the USDA Forest Service reported 66 wildfires throughout the National Forests in Alabama that burned approximately 2,282 acres of national forests. Out of the 66 wildfires, 49 were caused by the carelessness of debris burning, cigarettes, campfires, and arson. “We can all make a difference in reducing human-caused fires during these very dry conditions,” added Born. Remember these fire prevention guidelines:

(1) Follow all public-use restrictions and access closures; (2) Check to see if campfires

are allowed; (3) If allowed, make sure your campfire is cold to the touch and dead out before you leave; (4) Keep vehicles off dry grass. Heat from exhaust systems can ignite fires; and (5) Use your ashtray if you smoke.

For information concerning any public restrictions and closure orders, please contact all district offices before visiting: Bankhead District (205) 489-5111, Conecuh District (334) 222-2555, Shoal Creek District (256) 463-2272; Talladega District (256) 362-2909; Oakmulgee District (205) 926-9765; and the Tuskegee District (334) 727-2652.