

Winter Conditions May Warrant Restrictions On Forest Road Travel

For Immediate Release

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Flagstaff, AZ—With winter weather on the way, managers of the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests said it may become necessary to temporarily restrict motor vehicle travel. This is a seasonal restriction, which includes all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

Temporary travel restrictions will be implemented on the Coconino National Forest and on the Williams and Tusayan ranger districts of the Kaibab National Forest when soils become saturated due to precipitation. The North Kaibab Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest will not be included in the wet weather travel policy due to different soil conditions and elevations.



If it becomes necessary to implement wet weather travel restrictions, cross-country motor vehicle travel will be prohibited, and many roads will be temporarily closed. A backbone system of roads may remain open to allow forest access. However, during times of heavy rain or snow, forest managers could choose to close all roads in affected areas to protect forest roads and resources and to provide for public safety. Roads that remain open are the most suitable for travel during wet conditions and will be strategically located to provide reasonable access to the forests.

During previous winters, forest roads, soils and vegetation sustained damage from motorized vehicles following periods of wet weather. Some forest travelers continued to use forest roads and travel cross-country despite extremely wet and muddy conditions, which led to deep ruts and the creation of alternate routes around problem spots.

When wet weather travel restrictions become necessary, they will be implemented in a similar way to fire restrictions and area closures. Based on conditions on the ground, the forest supervisor will issue an official order which restricts use to those roads that are most suitable for travel. The restrictions will be lifted as soon as conditions allow. Just as with fire area closures, wet weather travel restrictions will likely not have to be implemented annually.

John Booth, Forest Engineer for both the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests, emphasized “The wet weather road restrictions are a proactive attempt to protect roads and soils during the times when they are most susceptible to damage.”

The Kaibab and Coconino National Forests developed the wet weather travel policy in coordination with the Arizona Game and Fish Department due to the large numbers of hunters in the woods during the times when cold, wet weather is most likely to occur. The goal of the partnership between the forests and the department is to provide reasonable motor vehicle access while also protecting forest roads and resources and providing for public safety.



“Besides the damage to the forest that occurs following very wet weather, we also have drivers getting stuck in the mud and having to call for help from towing companies to have their vehicles extricated,” Booth said. “We had to find a solution to this problem.”

When restrictions are implemented, signs reading, “**Entering wheeled motorized restriction area. Use only roads and trails shown on official map,**” along with a second sign displaying a map showing open routes in the area, will be posted at strategic access points on the forests. Motorized travelers will be required to stay on those designated routes until the soils dry out and the restrictions have been lifted.

If wet weather travel restrictions are implemented, information including maps showing routes to be left open will be posted on the forest websites:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/>

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/kai/>

Information will also be available at Forest Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department offices, which are closed Thursday for the Thanksgiving holiday but will be open on Friday, November 28, 2008.

On the Coconino National Forest, several other roads may be closed due to winter conditions:

- **Road Closures** – Higher elevation roads which will be closed this weekend include: Lockett Meadow Road 552 and Elden Lookout Road 557.
- **Pre-Season Snowbowl Road Closure** - Snowbowl Road is closed on weekends and holidays when winter road conditions exist and the ski area is not open. Arizona Snowbowl is responsible for all snowplow and cinder operations on Snowbowl Road, but does not plow on weekends and holidays when they are closed.
- **Seasonal Motorized Vehicle Closures** - Two areas off of Highway 180 are subject to a “Seasonal Motorized Wheeled Vehicle Closure” from December 1 – March 31. **These areas will be closed to wheeled vehicles.** The Wing Mountain Vehicle Closure encompasses the cross-country ski trails, the snowplay area, and includes Forest Roads 222, 519, 519A and 222B beyond Wing Mountain parking area. The Flagstaff Nordic Center Vehicle Closure includes the trail system and Forest Road 151E. These seasonal closures are implemented in order to provide managed winter recreation areas.

More information: [Wet Weather Travel Restrictions](#)

