

# NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service  
Stanislaus National Forest



Contact: Public Affairs (209) 532-3671 ext.244  
<http://fs.usda.gov/stanislaus>

## ***Forest Camping Opens for Memorial Day Weekend***

**Sonora, Calif. (May 23, 2012)**...The Forest Service today announced that 28 Stanislaus National Forest campgrounds and picnic areas will be open to accommodate visitors and campers for this Memorial Day weekend. At some higher elevations this year, a number of campgrounds will open later as the snow melts. All of the Forest's 53 developed campgrounds, offering 1,466 campsites, are scheduled to be open and available by mid-summer this year.

Open campgrounds, picnic areas, and dispersed, undeveloped camping areas will provide an extensive array of recreation opportunities spanning the entire Forest this season. Forest visitors are encouraged to contact local Ranger Stations for current information on changing conditions, campfire permits, and the best places to camp. Campfire permits are required for campfires and barbecues outside developed campgrounds.

California State Highway routes over Ebbetts Pass Hwy 4, Sonora Pass Hwy 108, and Tioga Pass Hwy 120 are all open. The latest, updated information on State Highways can be obtained by calling the toll-free CALTRANS road information phone line at (800) 427-7623, or visit their website at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/cgi-bin/roads.cgi>.

### **Information**

Outdoor recreationists are encouraged, before heading out, to contact Stanislaus NF ranger stations for the most current information on camping, roads, and trail conditions. Forest information, recreation maps, campfire permits, wilderness permits, and personal use fuel wood permits can be obtained at all Forest offices during the following summer business hours beginning June 1:

<b>FOREST OFFICE</b>	<b>LOCATION / PHONE</b>	<b>DAYS / HOURS</b>
Forest Supervisor's Office	19777 Greenley Road, Sonora Phone (209) 532-3671	Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Mi-Wuk Ranger Station	Highway 108, Mi-Wuk Village Phone (209) 586-3234	Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Summit Ranger Station	Highway 108, Pinecrest Phone (209) 965-3434	Monday-Sunday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Groveland Ranger Station	Highway 120, Buck Meadows Phone (209) 962-7825	Monday-Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Calaveras Ranger Station	Highway 4, Hathaway Pines Phone (209) 795-1381	Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Alpine Station open Thursday through Monday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

Stanislaus National Forest offices are distributing copies of the latest Stanislaus Traveler, the newsletter that offers information on Stanislaus National Forest outdoor recreation opportunities. Additional information on recreation opportunities may be obtained by visiting the Stanislaus National Forest website at <http://fs.usda.gov/stanislaus>.

## **Camping and hiking**

Forest conditions vary by elevation and current weather patterns. Campers, hikers, and backpackers should expect to find the snow level beginning at approximately 7,000 feet, with snow pack and isolated drifts in shady areas and on north-facing slopes, and with snow coverage on slopes above 8,000 feet. Developed campgrounds at lower and middle elevations are open, with others at higher elevations opening later as conditions dry.

Developed campground availability depends primarily on the day and time that visitors arrive. Most campgrounds are operated on a first-come, first-serve basis, and are filled to capacity by Friday afternoon. Campground fees range from \$5.00 to \$22.00 per night, with the largest group sites ranging up to \$120 per night. The maximum stay in most campgrounds is 14 days, with a 21-day maximum stay.

A small number of campgrounds offer campsites by reservation through the National Recreation Reservation Service, telephone (877) 444-6777, or on the web at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Reservation campgrounds include Pinecrest Campground and Pioneer Group Camp on the Summit Ranger District, Big Meadow Campground and Lodgepole Group Camp on the Calaveras District, and a number of campsites in the Dimond O Campground, as well as the Pines Group site on the Groveland Ranger District.

Undeveloped, or "primitive", camping is permitted at dispersed camping sites throughout the Forest. You will be able to park within one vehicle length (vehicle plus trailer) off of a National Forest Transportation Route and walk-in to access dispersed camping, fuel wood gathering and other activities. Fees are not charged at dispersed sites, and visitors are required to obtain a free campfire permit for a campfire, gas stove, or bar-b-cue.

Visitors are also required to camp at least 100 feet from meadows, rivers and streams, and pack out all litter to keep the Forest clean. The public is encouraged to adopt a ***“Pack it in, Pack it out, Pack it home!”*** plan to help reduce impacts to developed camping areas, and to maintain dispersed camping areas and other dispersed sites where no trash pick-up services are provided.

### **Trail conditions are icy in places**

Snow and ice still covers some trailheads and hiking trails in the Emigrant, Carson-Iceberg, and Mokelumne Wildernesses. In areas where trails are partially open, the conditions are wet and muddy, with stream crossings somewhat swollen by snowmelt, with icy conditions in the early morning and late afternoon hours. Hikers are requested to delay use on muddy trails until trail surface conditions become dryer and stabilize. This helps to prevent resource damage.

Even during early summer, some higher-elevation hiking trails may have snow in patches and drifts, with icy conditions in mornings and evenings. Hikers should be equipped and prepared for rapidly changing weather conditions due to afternoon spring and summer thunderstorms.

### **Avoid infesting the Forest with invasive species**

Once trails are open, stock users are asked to follow “weed-free” practices before arriving on Forest, or when traveling in Wilderness. Clean off-highway vehicle tires and undercarriages to remove hitchhiking weed seeds. Inspect your boats and trailers for signs of invasive aquatic species, and never transport or dump bilge water outside the areas where you collected it. Don’t take firewood with you on your camping trip, forest adventure or up to your hunting camp. Collect or purchase firewood locally, within fifty miles of your campsite. Tree-killing insects and diseases can’t move far on their own, but when people move firewood they can jump hundreds of miles.

### **Early spring water runoff conditions exist**

Due to seasonal snow melt rivers and streams throughout the Forest are running swift and high. Visitors are asked to always exercise extra caution near watercourses during the late spring and early summer months. When recreating near rivers and streams, remember the following:

- Always keep careful watch over children near swift water—at all times!
- Always watch footing near slippery, snow-covered stream banks and river shorelines.
- Always avoid hopping on slick rocks or slippery logs across strong currents.
- Always wear a life jacket when fishing in swift water, especially rivers.
- Never attempt to cross fast-moving water—the currents are stronger than you think!

### **Forest roads are fragile due to wetness**

Forest roads are open at elevations below 6,000 feet with occasional snow drifts, but wet conditions are present, and storm damage exists in some areas. Visitors are asked to adjust their driving to current Forest road conditions, use defensive driving techniques, and stay alert for storm damage including boulders, rockslides, slumps, and washouts.

Driving on soft, muddy, saturated un-surfaced Forest roads can easily cause deep wheel ruts resulting in road damage and potential soil erosion. If travelers find they are causing wheel ruts on muddy, un-surfaced roads, it's time to back-track and look for drier areas. To provide for safety, protect vital access routes, and care for the land, visitors are asked to stay alert, exercise care, and adjust their travel on Forest roads to accommodate road conditions.

Traveling on drier roads helps to reduce maintenance costs and protects forest resources. Proper and responsible use of vehicles is encouraged so that Forest roads remain in good shape for the next visitors. Causing damage to roads can result in damage to other forest resources, and is a violation of federal regulations carrying up to a \$5,000 fine and/or 6 months in jail.

Maps showing Forest roads, brochures displaying trails open to off-highway vehicle use, and pamphlets explaining outdoor recreation opportunities are available at Forest Service Ranger Stations. Personal Use Fuel wood Permits are available at all Stanislaus National Forest offices, and they are required for fuel wood gathering.

### **Campfire permits are required outside developed campgrounds**

Conditions will soon become tinder-dry in the summer heat, and fire danger is expected to increase early this year. As the summer wears on, and days become hotter and drier, fire restrictions will likely go into effect. Forest fire officials are urging visitors to exercise extra care to prevent their campfires and barbeques from causing accidental wildland fires.

Visitors are encouraged to stop in at the Forest Service Ranger Station nearest their destination to find the best places to camp, get fire prevention information and campfire permits, receive an update on the current fire danger, and check for the areas where fire restrictions may be in effect:

- Always obtain a Campfire Permit, where required, and carefully follow the permit terms.
- Always clear away all flammable vegetation to bare mineral soil 5 feet around campfires.
- Always extinguish all campfires and briquette barbeques—drown them with plenty of water.
- Never build a campfire under overhanging tree limbs or near brush.
- Never build or maintain a campfire on a hot, dry, windy afternoon.
- Never leave a burning or smoldering campfire unattended—not even for one minute!
- Always be sure your campfire and briquettes are out, dead out, before leaving camp.

Campfire permits can be obtained for free at any USDA Forest Service or CAL FIRE (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) office. For more information on outdoor recreation opportunities, call (209) 532-3671, or visit our Forest web site at: <http://fs.usda.gov/stanislaus>.