

CIBOLA NATIONAL FOREST and GRASSLANDS Special Orders and Closures

A. Forest Fire Restrictions and Area Closures

AUTHORITY

The Regional Forester and Forest Supervisor can issue restrictions and closures of National Forest Lands (16 U.S.C. 551, and 36 CFR § 261.50(a), and 36 CFR § 261.50(b)). Fire restrictions or closures are not normally established until after conferring with other agencies in the local area and getting concurrence with the need for the action.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the restrictions and closures is to reduce the risk of human-caused fire during periods of extended extreme fire danger.

TYPES & EFFECTS

District Rangers and cooperators will be contacted for proper coordination prior to a decision to enter any level of restriction. There are four levels of restriction and they are defined as follows:

Stage I – The first stage occurs when there is an increasing fire danger and/or a increasing preparedness level, and the risks of keeping the forest open to all activities begins to be outweighed by the risks inherent in doing so. Stage 1 imposes relatively minor restrictions aimed at preventing the start of wildfires based on human activities that are known to be high risk, specifically smoking and campfires.

Definition: No smoking outside of vehicles, or buildings. No open campfires outside of developed sites. No fireworks.

Stage II – As the risks increase, the line officer may choose to move Stage II. This stage intensifies the restrictions from Stage I by focusing on activities that, although normally managed under permit or contract, have a relatively high risk of causing a fire start. Restriction under stage II will affect forest users and will have economic impacts to contractors, permittees, and others. Therefore the decision to move into Stage II will involve a risk benefit assessment as well as consideration of economic and social impacts.

Definition: In addition to Stage I restrictions, adds prohibitions to explosives, discharging a firearm, air rifle or gas gun, chainsaw or other internal combustion engines (possibly during certain hours), welding, and using a motor vehicle off forest development roads. Also requires spark arrestors.

Stage III – Stage III is the closure of specific parts or areas of the forest. This stage is selected when the ability to manage risks using Stage I or II restrictions is no longer viable. The social, economic, and political impacts of implementing a closure at this point are outweighed by the benefits associated with virtually eliminating the potential for human-

caused fire starts. **All activities, internal as well as external, will require a waiver signed by the Forest Supervisor.**

Definition: Partial Forest closure, with very few exceptions (as detailed in the closure order).

Stage IV – Stage IV is full closure. This stage is selected when the ability to manage risks using Stage III closures is no longer viable. The social, economic, and political impacts of implementing a full closure at this point are outweighed by the benefits associated with virtually eliminating the potential for human-caused fire starts. **All activities, internal as well as external, will require a waiver signed by the Forest Supervisor.**

Definition: Full forest closures, with very few exceptions (as detailed in the closure order).

B. Cibola NF Fire Restrictions and Fire Closure Criteria

INTRODUCTION

The coordination and notification plan is critical to seamless and smooth operations when going in and out of public use restrictions and/or closures. In an effort to ensure clarity of process, with both our external and internal cooperators, all roles and responsibilities must be spelled out. When there are upward trends in the criteria, fire restriction and closures should be considered. When there are downward trends in the criteria, fire restrictions and closures should be rescinded.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Standardizes and simplifies the process for initiating and rescinding public fire restrictions and forest closures.
- 2) Establish fire restriction areas that have adequately described boundaries, and which enter the upper levels of fire danger periods at approximately the same time.
- 3) Develop a media plan with the Forest PIO, which reduces confusion and provides a coordinated interagency approach to better inform the public of restrictions and /or closure orders.
- 4) Develop standard definitions for Fire Restriction Stages I, II, III, and IV that make sense and are clearly understood by the public, and each agency.
- 5) Restrictions/closures are legally enforceable.
- 6) Develop standard measurable and predictive fire danger criteria that provide managers with direction concerning when and where to initiate/remove restrictions and closures.
- 6) Establish responsibility and time frames for dealing with the different phases of this

plan. Industrial operations are contractual and will be managed by the District Ranger, FMO and COR. Each district will ensure that Prevention personnel or assigned personnel (COR) will perform inspections of equipment as stated in each contract.

The following is a guideline on criteria to determine the need for fire restrictions/closures. This criterion is based on a number of calculated, field sampled, and quantifiable variables. Keep in mind that local/political parameters will also need to be considered in making a determination for the need for restrictions/closures, but primary consideration should be the concern for large fire activity and the potential for unacceptable loss.

CRITERIA PARAMETERS TO CONSIDER

When the factors in the criteria parameters approach critical levels for an area and the upward trend is persistent, begin **considering** the initiation of restriction/closure. The following is a list of supporting documentation that should be reviewed prior to making the decision to go into restrictions/closures. This list is not all inclusive:

- 1) Select the **best weather stations** that represent Cibola National Forest geographic areas.
 - a) Calculate from NFDRS the Energy Release Component (ERC's) at the 90th and 97th percentile.
 - b) *Calculate from NFDRS the 1000-Hour Fuel Moisture, 10th and 7th percentile (*Should be validated by tracking district fuel samples along with live fuel moistures, 1, 10 and 100 hr fuel moistures).
- 2) Review **weather trends** from the Albuquerque National Weather Service, zone fire weather forecasts, and/or 7-14 day outlook.
- 3) Review **Fire Potential Outlook** from the Southwest Coordination Center Predictive Services website.
- 4) How many **fire ignitions** has the district had that suppression resources were unable to control in first burning period? Are fires resistance to control?
- 5) What is the **Resource availability** within district/forest/region?
- 6) **On-going Contracts/Force Account** (Consider all aspects of on-going work and implications of shutting down operations). During restrictions and/or closures, waivers should be an exception and not the rule.
- 7) Social and economic impacts within the community.
- 8) **Time lines** to implement restrictions/closures are met. Refer to Coordination and Notifications below.

COORDINATION AND NOTIFICATIONS

There are multi-levels of coordination that must transpire in order for smooth operations to occur. The first level is at the internal level. The second level is the external partners.

When the forest and district are in agreement that restrictions are needed, the Forest Fire Management Officer/District Ranger will inform the Forest Supervisor that the threshold to implement fire restrictions has been reached. Be prepared to discuss the rationale from the criteria considerations and the proposed time line for implementation to begin.

INTERNAL COORDINATION

Internal coordination should include, but not limited to: the District Line Officers; District FMO/Duty Officer; District PIO/Prevention; District Silviculturalist/Forester; Forest FMO/Duty Officer; Forest Supervisor; Forest PAO; and Forest Timber Staff . As a rule of thumb, coordination should begin at a minimum of **10 - 14 days** prior to implementation and **three days** prior to rescinding of any restrictions or closures.

Law Enforcement will need a minimum of **10 days** before implementation to ensure OGC can approve the restriction/closure order.

The Forest Timber Officer will need a minimum of **10 days** to coordinate with any contractors that have active timber sale operations.

The Forest PIO will need notification **five days** prior to implementation to get the news release out to the media market.

For Stage II and higher, severity requests are the primary proponent to implement and enforce restrictions and closures. Severity request are made to the RO **two pay periods in advance**, so preplanning is critical. Ordering resources on a fire code for this purpose is inappropriate.

EXTERNAL COORDINATION

After the initial internal coordination, all external partners should be contacted and updated on the implementation timeline and waivers obtained as warranted.