



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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“White arrow” forest road signs to stay in place for hunting season and some campgrounds re-open

White Mountains, AZ; August 24, 2012 — The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs) will continue to use the “white arrow” signing system through the fall and winter seasons to specify roads within the Wallow Fire burned area that are open or closed for motorized use.

Road re-openings in the Wallow Fire burned area

As forest crews continue to abate road hazards, such as cutting snags and installing culverts, more roads will be re-opened for public traffic and marked with white arrow road signs. “The Forest Service is working hard to respond to public desires to re-open more roads in the Wallow Fire burned area, especially as hunting season gets busier. We’re concentrating our efforts in those areas and on those roads that we know are most popular with hunters and recreationists,” explained Ryan Domsalla, Recreation Staff for the ASNFs. Already since the end of last summer, the forests have been able to re-open 670 miles of road.

Auger Canyon Road (Forest Road 81) will remain closed due to substantial rainfall over the past two weeks. The Forest Service will re-open it as soon as the rains subside and the road dries out, hopefully, in the next 2-3 weeks.

The forest closure order that was originally set in place following the Wallow Fire has been modified again to allow forest users possessing valid hunting tags and fuelwood cutting permits (excluding free fuelwood permits for salvage trees) access to roads not on the white arrow system. The entire forest order and a map displaying what areas and roads are open or closed can be found on the ASNFs Web site at: www.fs.usda.gov/asnf.

Access and safety tips for hunters

For those that are hunting with a big game tag during an open season for that big game tag, the ASNFs will allow hunters to use any road marked with vertical or horizontal numbered signs (designated National Forest System road), including those roads that are not marked under the white arrow system, and to travel on or park their vehicle within 30 feet of the road. Additionally, hunters in possession of a big game hunting tag may use motorized means to travel cross-country to retrieve their legally harvested game, unless prohibited by other laws or regulations (such as in designated wilderness areas). Hunters are urged to use caution when retrieving big game with a vehicle to avoid damaging habitat.

Big game retrieval is authorized throughout the ASNFs and is not limited in the Wallow Fire burned area. However, overnight camping is prohibited in the following six high-intensity burned areas: Auger Creek Closure Area, Fish Creek Closure Area, Middle Mountain Closure Area, Milligan Valley Closure Area, Prime Canyon Closure Area, and West Fork Closure Area.

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Increased situational awareness is especially important for hunters traveling within the Wallow Fire burned area. Remember to look up, look down, and look all around. Snags and dead trees, flash floods, and unstable soils are just a few of the hazards to be aware of. Hunters are encouraged to carry the means to remove fallen trees, such as a chainsaw or handsaw, which may block their access on roads.

Campground re-openings for Labor Day weekend

Several campgrounds were kept closed this summer because of concerns for flash flooding. Two of these, Blue Crossing and West Fork, will remain closed. However, seven campgrounds will re-open on Tuesday August 28th and be available in time for the Labor Day holiday weekend:

- On the **Alpine Ranger District**, Aspen, Buffalo Crossing, Deer Creek, Diamond Rock, Raccoon, and Horse Springs Campgrounds, located on the East Fork of the Black River, will be available for day-use activities and overnight camping. For more information call (928) 339-5000.
- On the **Springerville Ranger District**, South Fork Campground, located approximately 10 miles west of Springerville-Eagar, will be available for day-use activities only. Apache County probation crews spent the prior weekend cleaning up the site and preparing it for visitor use, including removing hazard trees that will be cut up and available through a local firewood assistance program. For more information call (928) 333-4372.

Although the monsoon season is winding down, visitors should continue to exercise caution and alertness in these areas as rainstorms can still occur and the risk for flooding still exists. Depending on weather and road conditions, the Forest Service may close any of these campgrounds for the sake of public safety. Visitors are encouraged to contact the local ranger station for the current status of these campgrounds before heading out to the woods.