



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 18, 2013
11:55 a.m.

LA PLATA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ENACT FIRE RESTRICTIONS

Durango, CO – Due to the increasingly dry conditions, low humidity and frequent winds in La Plata County, and the serious threat of fire danger that these conditions impose, the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners today enacted restrictions effective at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 19, 2013 on open burning on private lands in the unincorporated areas of La Plata County and upon all lands owned by La Plata County.

The fire restrictions were enacted by the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners upon the recommendation of Sheriff Duke Schirard and the Chiefs of the four local fire districts within La Plata County serving specific areas of the County. The restrictions do provide flexibility to the local fire chiefs to ease restrictions within their respective jurisdictions, if they deem such actions to be safe, appropriate and prudent in their professional opinions.

“La Plata County has been experiencing frequent red flag warnings which are anticipated forecasts of high winds, high temperatures and low humidity that cause significant fire danger. In some areas of La Plata County, we are currently two inches below average for our annual precipitation and the ground fuels are now turning brown and dry which increases the potential for the ignition of a wildfire,” explained Butch Knowlton, Emergency Management Director. “As a result of those conditions, La Plata County is now facing extremely dry conditions that can provide explosive fire growth and behavior.”

The fire restrictions prohibit open burning, burn barrels and agricultural burning on private property in the unincorporated areas of La Plata County and on property owned by La Plata County. The use of a campfire, coal or wood-burning stove, any type of charcoal grill or open fire in any undeveloped area is prohibited. The fire restrictions do not include charcoal fires in suitable containers or gas grills for barbeques at private residences or fires within designated campground pits with protective grates; however, residents and visitors alike are encouraged not to leave these fires unattended and to carefully and fully extinguish them after use.

The open flame prohibitions also include the following:

- Smoking is limited to vehicles, buildings, developed recreational areas and 3-foot-wide areas cleared of vegetation;
- Use of explosive material is prohibited;
- Use of any internal combustion engine is prohibited unless it is equipped with an approved and functioning spark-arresting device;

- Welding and cutting operations must be conducted with a 20-foot radius safe zone free of vegetation with a 2.5 gallon pressurized fire extinguisher or 5 lb. ABC extinguisher or pressurized water supply and proper hand tools on site with a fire watch individual standing by continuously;
- Flaring for production wells may be allowed with approval from the designated fire chief; and
- Flaring activities at established refineries are exempted from these restrictions.

For specific information about the fire restrictions, individuals should contact their local fire department. A violation of the fire restrictions shall constitute a class 2 petty offense punishable by a fine of up to \$300 for each violation.

The La Plata County fire response agencies will continue to monitor the situation and if the conditions continue to deteriorate, a more restrictive fire ban may be developed. The fire restrictions will remain in effect until such time as the threat of fire danger in La Plata County has reduced significantly, as determined by the Sheriff, local fire chiefs and the La Plata County Director of Emergency Management.

(Note: A copy of the Board's resolution is attached.)

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