



Green Mountain National Forest



Finger Lakes National Forest

Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests

For Immediate Release

Friday, September 16, 2011

News Release

Contact: Ethan Ready 802-747-6760

Caring for the Land and Serving People

GMNF NOW OPEN TO VERMONTERS AND VISITORS

NATIONAL FOREST OPEN UNLESS AREAS ARE POSTED CLOSED

RUTLAND, VT. Forest Service officials announced today that the 400,000 acre Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) is now open except for specific areas that are posted closed. The GMNF was officially closed to the public on Thursday, September 1 due to extensive damage from Hurricane Irene. In recent weeks, employees have been working diligently to evaluate the condition of roads, trails, and recreational facilities damaged by the storm. Forest Supervisor Colleen Madrid decided to re-open the Forest to the public, but cautioned that several areas will still be closed due to significant public safety hazards and impassable roads, bridges, and trails.

Supervisor Madrid said, “We have come a long way in the past two weeks, and I want to thank our partners and the public for being patient as we continue to deal with the aftermath of this natural disaster.” Madrid went on to say, “With the exception of the areas that have been posted closed, people are encouraged to explore and enjoy the Green Mountain National Forest, as they have in the past.” Throughout the Forest, employees have begun opening road and trail gates and up-dating closure postings. However, Forest Service officials also warn the public to be mindful of rough conditions, to obey any and all closure postings, and to use prudence and caution when visiting the Forest.

While Forest Service employees expect to complete initial road and trail damage assessments by the end of the week, much more work remains to repair the Forest’s infrastructure. The Forest has yet to complete a comprehensive assessment of natural resource-related damages, and many of the Class 1 roads that also serve as Vermont Association of Snow Traveler (VAST) trails in the winter.

The GMNF is one of the more heavily recreated national forests in the nation, serving between 3 and 4 million visitors per year. Some recreation activities on the Forest include: hunting, fishing, horseback riding, snowmobiling, hiking, camping, mountain biking, alpine and cross-country skiing. Like many tourist destinations, the GMNF is a major contributor to local economies and is noted for some of the nation’s most brilliant foliage view-sheds, which will be glowing with shades of red, pink, and orange in early October. Vermonters and visitors are encouraged to contact the Forest Service with specific questions or for help in identifying scenic hot spots. Traveling to view the vibrant fall colors has been a life-long tradition for many people in and around the Green Mountain State.

“This is a special time for our residents, our visitors, our forests and those of us that work to manage our public lands,” said Madrid. To celebrate the foliage season and the centennial of the Weeks Act, the GMNF and several partner organizations have teamed up to sponsor a free foliage festival at Sugarbush Resort in Warren, Vermont from 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM on Sunday, October 2, 2011. Forest officials expect that there will be an influx of local and visitor traffic in the coming weeks; motorists are encouraged to be mindful of where they park and to use extra caution when they are driving and recreating on the Forest. For additional information on GMNF closures, please visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/greenmountain>

####