

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service
Santa Fe National Forest



For Immediate Release

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FIRE RESTRICTIONS BEGINNING MAY 27, 2004

SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST & VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE

(Santa Fe, NM)—The Santa Fe National Forest and Valles Caldera National Preserve will move into Stage I, the first level of fire restrictions beginning one minute after midnight, Thursday morning, May 27, 2004. Campfires will be limited to developed camp and picnic grounds (where grills are provided). Smoking is permitted only in vehicles, enclosed building or in developed campgrounds. No campfires will be allowed in Black Canyon Campground below Hyde State Park (near Santa Fe) because of the higher level of fire risk in that area.

Restrictions will go into effect prior to the Memorial Day Holiday, one of the busiest weekends, in terms of forest visitation.

Exception:

Three of the four Congressionally designated Wilderness areas within the Santa Fe National Forest will be the exceptions: **Pecos, San Pedro Parks, and Chama River Canyon Wilderness** areas, as they are higher elevation, have shading, many have north-facing slopes and still have snowpack. While the use of campfires is not restricted within the “Wilderness” at this time, people are asked to be cautious with fire use. Make sure campfires are dead out before leaving your camping area.

The **Dome Wilderness** (in the Jemez Mountains), adjacent to Bandelier National Monument will fall under the same fire restrictions as the rest of the forest. **Campfires and smoking will not be allowed within the Dome Wilderness** area as there are more values at risk, it is lower in elevation, southern exposure (more direct sunlight) and cured grasses.

“We have reached very high fire danger levels now and have to be extremely careful with fire. This year we’ve been fortunate, in that resource conditions haven’t warranted the need for fire restrictions until now.” said Zepeda, “**We are not closing any areas of the forest at this time.** If and when conditions dictate closure, we will phase-in closures of certain high risk areas and do all we can to minimize impacts to communities, visitors and businesses before we’d impose a complete forest closure.”

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-add one- Santa Fe N.F. Fire Restrictions

“We’ve been experiencing several hot and windy days and are not seeing moisture recovery in the grasses, other plants and trees,” said Paul Orozco, Forest Fire Management Officer. “Fire danger will most likely remain high until our seasonal monsoons kick in which could be sometime in late June or July. People out in the forest should be vigilant about their surroundings and any sudden changes in weather. ”

“The Valles Caldera National Preserve will follow with the same level of restrictions as the Santa Fe National Forest throughout this fire season,” said Dennis Trujillo, Preserve Manager.

❖ **Open Campfire Restrictions:**

Campfires, charcoal grills and stove fires **are prohibited** on national forest lands, except in Forest Service developed camp and picnic grounds where grills are provided.

Pressurized liquid or gas stoves, lanterns and heaters meeting are allowed.

❖ **Smoking Restrictions:**

Smoking is allowed within an enclosed vehicle or building; a developed recreation site; or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter and free of all flammable material.

❖ **Fireworks:**

As always, fireworks are prohibited on all national forest lands.

We need everyone’s help to keep the forest free from fires for the duration of this fire season.

Additional fire information can be obtained at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/fire> . For other local fire restrictions for any public lands in the southwest, you can call **toll free 1-877-864-6985**. To report a fire, call (505) 438-7800.



NOTE TO MEDIA:

*Santa Fe N.F. includes national forest lands near Jemez, Cuba, Coyote, Gallina, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Espanola, Pecos, Las Vegas and Mora .

*For specific information on the Valles Caldera National Preserve, please call Julie Grey, 661-3333.

There are 4 different levels (Stages) of restriction/closures in response to Fire risk:

Stage I (1st Level)--No smoking outside of vehicles, or buildings. No open campfires outside of developed sites. No fireworks.

Stage II (2nd Level)--In addition to Stage I, adds prohibitions for explosives, chainsaw or other internal combustion engines (possibly during certain hours), welding, and using a motor vehicle off forest development roads; further restricts use of campfires. Also requires approved spark arresters.

Stage III (3rd Level)--The closure of specific areas of the Forest (as detailed in the Closure Order)

Stage IV (4th Level)--Full forest closures (as detailed in the Closure Order)