

DECISION MEMO
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE – FOREST SERVICE

AREA CLOSURE ORDER – 01-07-03
SANTA CLARA/MOJAVE RIVERS RANGER DISTRICT

ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

DECISION

It is my decision to issue a Forest Order authorizing a temporary closure of a portion of the Santa Clara/Mojave Rivers Ranger District of the Angeles National Forest, including the closure of the National Forest Roads and Trails within the area. The closure will be effective from October 6, 2007 through October 5, 2008. The area, roads, and trails affected are shown on the map attached to the order.

The closure will address public health and safety concerns related to the reconstruction of multiple utilities damaged as a result of inclement weather and geologic movement. The utilities repairs require establishing extensive open trenches, setting of high voltage power lines and movement of large equipment adjacent to and on the roadways. The assessment of the complexity of the needed repairs and reconstruction in conjunction with the operating restrictions for fire and wet weather over the past two years has demonstrated the need for the continued closure.

These restrictions will limit public use of the area. Visitors whose values and traditions involve the use of the closed area will be directed by Forest Service personnel to areas where those activities are authorized and available.

NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

An emergency situation was identified as existing as a result of prolonged and intense rainfall in 2005 that led to numerous landslides and pipeline ruptures in the proposed closure area. The area was temporarily closed from June 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005 (Forest Order No. 01-05-05, signed by Jody Noiron on June 1, 2005) for temporary and permanent repairs.

Temporary services were accomplished and the permanent repairs were developed based on the data available. With the implementation of the permanent repair actions it was found that the subsurface material in the area was actively shifting. This required reengineering of the project resulting in an expansion of needed replacement and reconstruction of the utility infrastructure.

The evaluation of the complexity of each project and the number of projects has determined a need of a year of high risk construction. The hazards and complexity of the operations makes it necessary to keep the area closed while construction crews complete the work. Public use of this area, as well as the roads and trails, would continue to present serious hazard to their safety and would further compromise the condition of these pipelines, and their maintenance and operation.

REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This decision is categorically excluded from documentation under Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 31.12(1) – Orders issued pursuant to 36 CFR Part 261 – Prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety.

As a result of the analysis documented above, I find there are no extraordinary circumstances that might cause the action to have significant environmental effects; therefore the proposed action is excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public information meetings were not conducted during the initial pipeline rupture due to the exigency of the situation. Affected residents and land owners will be notified through news releases and internet postings.

Coordination with the following co-operating agencies and companies has been ongoing and will continue until completion of the repairs:

1. Los Angeles County: Public Works Department
 Fire Department
 Sheriff's Department

2. State of California: Department of Fish and Game
 Highway Patrol
 CalTrans

3. Federal Highways Administration
4. Pacific Pipeline Company
5. Southern California Edison
6. Southern California Gas Company
7. SBC Communications, Inc./AT&T
8. Quest Communications

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

This action is consistent with management direction (Angeles National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act (FSM 1922.41 and FSH 1909.12)).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This action may be implemented immediately.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is not subject to review or appeal under the requirements of 36 CFR 215.8(a)(4).

APPROVED: */s/ Sonja O. Bergdahl*
Acting Forest Supervisor
Angeles National Forest

DATE: October 5, 2007