



Date: September 19, 2006
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The widespread rain this weekend has prompted land managers to ease or lift fire restrictions in portions of south-central Montana. In some areas, however, restrictions and closures are still in effect.

Fire restrictions in Big Horn, Carbon and Stillwater counties have been rescinded. Musselshell, Sweet Grass and Yellowstone counties have eased to Stage I restrictions. Treasure County remains in Stage II, and area closures related to the Derby and Jungle fires are still in place.

In addition, the Bureau of Land Management has re-opened the South Hills and Acton off-highway vehicle riding areas; Shepherd Ah Nei remains closed due to wet conditions. All three areas had been closed due to fire danger.

Musselshell, Sweet Grass and Yellowstone counties are now under Stage I restrictions. Under Stage I, fires are prohibited except within developed recreation sites, and smoking is allowed only in areas cleared of flammable materials. Exemptions include fires fueled solely by liquid petroleum or LPG, or other activities for which there is a permit or written authorization.

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Treasure County is still under Stage II restrictions, which prohibits any open burning, including campfires. Smoking is allowed only in areas cleared of all flammable materials. Motorized vehicles must stay on designated roads and trails. Operating an internal combustion engine, welding, or using explosives is prohibited between 1 p.m. and 1 a.m.

The rain was a welcome reprieve, but fire danger persists. Please be cautious when working and recreating outdoors: make sure chainsaws and vehicles have spark arresters in place; stop and park only in areas cleared of vegetation; ensure that your campfire is dead out before you leave; and always carry a shovel, bucket and fire extinguisher. Also remember that cross-country travel is not allowed on most federal and state lands. **Anyone who causes a wildland fire intentionally or through negligence may be held accountable for damage and suppression costs.**

A burn permit is still required for any open burning other than campfires. Additional restrictions may also exist in certain areas. Before burning such things as slash piles, ditches, or fields, please contact your local fire department or sheriff's office for more information and to obtain any necessary permits.

For more information about fire prevention, please contact the Custer National Forest at 406-657-6200; Bureau of Land Management at 406-896-5013; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at 406-247-4400; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 406-247-2940; Carbon County at 406-446-1595; Stillwater County at 406-321-0204; Sweet Grass County at 406-932-5143; or your local fire department or sheriff's office.

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