

Cold Springs NWR • Columbia NWR • Conboy Lake NWR • Hanford Reach National Monument
McKay Creek NWR • McNary NWR • Saddle Mountain NWR • Toppenish NWR • Umatilla NWR



NEWS RELEASE



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Issues Fire Prevention Order

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued a fire prevention order for the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The order prohibits use of any type of open fire; including charcoal briquette and gas stoves; smoking outside of enclosed vehicles, and operating vehicles without a spark arrester. As always, fireworks are prohibited on all national wildlife refuge system lands.

The restrictions are being imposed because of increasingly hot and dry conditions, which place refuge lands at increased risk from wildfires. “Although the Columbia Basin has experienced significant rainfall over the last few weeks, we’re heading into the driest period of the year.” said Chris Schulte, Fire Management Officer, “In light of natural resource protection and public and firefighter safety, we feel that it is time to move forward with restrictions.”

During 2007, wildfires consumed more than 100,000 acres on the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which includes the Columbia, Cold Springs, Conboy Lake, McKay Creek, McNary, Saddle Mountain, Toppenish, and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges and the Hanford Reach National Monument. These burned areas are now highly susceptible for being permanently converted from shrub-steppe vegetation communities to plants like cheatgrass and knapweed, making the lands unsuitable for wildlife habitat and undesirable for recreation. “While rehabilitation efforts from last year’s fires are underway, they are expensive and labor-intensive.” said Greg Hughes, Project Leader, “We appreciate the way visitors are willing to comply with these prevention measures, which helps us do our job - taking care of some of America’s most precious natural resources.”

While the fire prevention order prohibits certain activities that could increase the risk of human-caused fire, the refuges remain open for a variety of recreational activities including fishing, boating, hiking, wildlife observation, and photography. The public is encouraged to contact the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex at (509) 546-8300 if they have any questions or need clarification on the restrictions. To report a fire, call 911 and be prepared to describe the general location. The fire order is posted at major entrances and parking areas on each refuge, and on the internet at hanfordreach.fws.gov.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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