

**Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests,
and Prineville District, Bureau of Land Management
Office of Communications**

Working as One to Serve Central Oregon

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OCHOCO NATIONAL FOREST CLOSURE STATUS & CAMPFIRE SAFETY

PRINEVILLE-The Ochoco National Forest has had two area and road closure orders in place due to the Black Canyon and Bridge Creek Fires, since August 15, 2008 and August 17, 2008, respectively. Hunters and other forest visitors have been eager to access the areas for camping and other recreational activities. Forest officials have been reviewing the continued need for the closures for public safety purposes on a daily basis.

As of this morning, Acting Paulina District Ranger Slater Turner announced that the Black Canyon closure, in its entirety, which includes the Black Canyon Wilderness and adjacent forest roads, has been lifted. Concurrently, Lookout Mountain District Ranger Bill Queen has announced the Bridge Creek closure has been amended to allow for additional public access along Forest Road 2630, however, the number of dead standing trees in the area preclude a complete lifting of the closure. The entire Bridge Creek Wilderness remains and adjacent Forest Service lands remain closed at this time.

“We are balancing the need to provide for public safety against allowing for as much public access to the national forest as is reasonable at this time,” said Ochoco National Forest Supervisor Jeff Walter.

A long holiday weekend is a popular time to visit public lands for a family outing or a long-awaited hunting or scouting trip. As we experience cooler temperatures in the mornings and evenings, it is natural to desire a campfire for warming and cooking purposes. It's also easy to relax and forget about the potential for an escaped campfire. Most of the grasses, shrubs, downed wood and trees are still quite dry and ready to burn if one is careless with campfires, cigarettes or off-road driving. Although public use restrictions are not currently in effect on federal public lands in Central Oregon, it is important to remain on alert and practice the utmost care with fire when visiting your public lands.

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The following are tips for preventing wildfires so that you can enjoy your outdoor adventures worry-free:

- Be informed about potential restrictions that may be in effect for the area you are visiting. Call ahead or visit websites before packing your vehicle and heading to your favorite destination spot.
- Restrict campfires to designated recreation sites or campgrounds. If campfires are allowed in dispersed areas, clear the area down to bare soil, contain the area (utilizing a fire pan is ideal because it does not leave a scar) and make sure the area is clear of vegetation.
- Limit the use of motorized vehicles to established roads or trails.
- Do not park vehicles over dry grass or brush, as hot exhaust systems can and do start fires.
- Smoke only in enclosed vehicles or in a 3-foot square area cleared to bare dirt.
- Keep a bucket, shovel and fire extinguisher in your vehicle.
- Do not leave your campfire unattended. When extinguishing your fire, mix dirt and water to cool it and stir, stir, stir with a shovel. Test the fire area with the back of your hand prior to leaving to make sure there is no remaining heat.

Remember that you can be held liable for costs incurred in suppressing a fire that you have started, so please, be safe-not sorry. For additional information on the lifting of closure orders, contact the Ochoco National Forest Supervisor's Office at (541) 416-6647 or visit www.inciweb.org Enjoy your time in the great outdoors!