



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 27, 2008

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**OCHOCO NATIONAL FOREST ANNOUNCES YEAR-ROUND CLOSURE IN
MCKAY CREEK WATERSHED**

PRINEVILLE-Forest Supervisor Jeff Walter recently signed a year-round closure order excluding motorized vehicles (including ATVs, 4WDs and snow machines) in the McKay Creek watershed of the Ochoco National Forest. The closure was effective as of June 26, 2008. The McKay watershed area includes the McKay Creek drainage, a popular area in close proximity to the community of Prineville.

The 45,700-acre closure area has been under a seasonal closure from December 1-May 31 for the past two years. The closure was implemented in 2007 due to extensive cross-country motor vehicle use and associated impacts to the ecosystem. In 2008, the seasonal closure was extended through the month of June due to the unusually wet conditions and concerns about natural resource damage.

Forest officials recently toured the McKay closure area to assess the current condition of soils and vegetation. They saw destroyed native vegetation in upland and riparian areas, an increase in noxious weeds, deeply rutted soils, increased soil erosion and sedimentation. Given the high level of resource damage, a determination has been made that a year-round closure is necessary to prevent additional resource damage and to allow recovery to a healthier functioning ecosystem.

“It is our responsibility to maintain habitat for fish and wildlife on National Forest system lands. This rather sensitive area is not fully recovering from the rapidly increasing motor vehicle use it has been receiving in recent years. We can see extensive damage on the ground from last year’s open season. If we open the area up now, we can only expect to see additional natural resource impacts. A year-round closure makes sense at this point in time,” said Forest Supervisor Jeff Walter.

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The natural resource damage occurring in McKay causes issues such as:

- Negative impacts to soils-Deep rutting and displacement of soil leads to increased erosion and sediment input into streams
- Negative impacts to riparian vegetation-Healthy vegetation is important for the stabilization of stream banks and for capturing sediments that may otherwise flow into the creek
- Damaged vegetation leads to exposure of bare soils, which are much more likely to become inhabited by noxious weeds

Maps of the closure area are available at the Ochoco National Forest headquarters at 3160 NE Third Street in Prineville. All roads within the closure area are closed unless indicated as “open” on the map. Cross-country off-road use is prohibited throughout the closure area.

Maps are also displayed at signboards along Forest Roads leading into the closure area. Main routes will remain open to street legal cars, trucks, motorcycles and ATVs. Non-street legal vehicles will not be permitted on Forest Roads 27 & 33.

Local law enforcement is emphasizing daily patrols of the area and will be enhancing enforcement efforts through the assistance of Lookout Mountain Ranger District personnel, wildland firefighting engines that patrol the area and the utilization of local volunteer groups.

Violation of the order is punishable by up to \$5000 in fines or imprisonment for up to six months or both. To see the closure area map, closure order and roads that remain open within the closure area, visit our website at www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon .

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