

NEWS CONTACT: DEBBIE LYONS, (541) 473-6218

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, VALE DISTRICT OFFICE, 100 OREGON STREET, VALE, OREGON 97918

Fire Restrictions Announced

VALE, Oregon -- Fire season and the recreation season are both upon us. To ensure continued enjoyment of public lands, visitors should be aware of fire use restrictions in the areas they travel this summer.

The Bureau of Land Management, Vale District Office, has announced public fire use restrictions will take effect Friday, June 30, for all BLM-managed public lands within Malheur County and within one mile of the Snake River beginning at Farewell Bend downstream (north) to Fisher Gulch in Asotin County, Washington, and all BLM-managed public lands within one mile of the Wallowa River and the Grande Ronde River from Minam to its confluence with the Snake River.

According to Mike Hartwell, Vale District Fire Management Officer, the restrictions that are going into effect are due to a build-up of dry fine fuels. "We constantly evaluate the fuel conditions in the district, and we don't like to put unnecessary restrictions on public land users. But the indicators say it's time to take a few extra precautions, and that's what we're going to do."

The restrictions will be posted in areas throughout the district and prohibit activities such as lighting fireworks; parking or operating an internal combustion engine in an area that is not clear of all flammable material, or traveling outside of existing roadways. Building camp fires is prohibited in all sites, including developed recreation areas, with seven exceptions. Campfires are permitted within existing metal fire rings located at Chukar Park near Juntura; Slocum Creek Campground in the Leslie Gulch area; Spring Recreation site on the Brownlee Reservoir; Westfall, Airstrip, and Bob Creek on the Hells Canyon Reservoir; and Carters Landing on Oxbow Reservoir.

In addition to the restrictions, other requirements are specified in the posted orders. Liquefied and bottled gas stoves and heaters are permitted; however, when used outside of developed recreation sites they must be used within an area at least ten feet in diameter that is clear of all flammable materials. Smoking outdoors is only permitted within areas barren of all flammable materials for at least a three-foot diameter, or aboard boats on rivers and lakes. When operating a motorized vehicle on public lands, you must carry a shovel at least 26 inches in length with at least an eight-inch blade, and either a one-gallon container of water or a fully charged 2.5 pound fire extinguisher.

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"We still want people to enjoy their public lands," said Hartwell, "we just want them to use caution and common sense so we can all continue to enjoy them. We're committed to doing everything we can to prevent fires, ensure public safety, and protect the public lands. These restrictions are just a way of getting the word out that we need everyone's help."

Individuals who violate restrictions on public lands not only endanger themselves and others, but they may be subject to penalties including fines and imprisonment.

For more information on current restrictions within the Vale District BLM, visit the Oregon BLM website at [www..blm.gov/OR](http://www.blm.gov/OR) or contact Debbie Lyons at 473-6218.

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