



News from the Forest Service

Edited on: November 24,2006

New Signs on Forest Service Roads

Managers of the Kaibab and Coconino National Forests plan to implement an emergency wet weather travel policy this winter depending on the amount and distribution of precipitation received.



During fall 2004 and winter 2004/2005, forest roads, soils and vegetation sustained damage from motorized vehicles following periods of very wet weather. Some forest travelers continued to use forest roads despite extremely wet and muddy conditions, which led to deep ruts and, in some areas, the creation of alternate routes around problem spots.

“There was more damage in 2004/2005 than should be tolerated, and we need to do something to reduce that,” said Stu Lovejoy, stewardship staff officer for the Kaibab National Forest. “The new wet weather travel policy is a proactive attempt to protect roads and soils during the times when they are most susceptible to damage.”

The Kaibab and Coconino National Forests developed the wet weather travel policy in coordination with the Arizona Game and Fish Department due to the large numbers of hunters in the woods during the times when very wet weather is most likely to occur. The goal of the partnership between the forests and the department is to provide reasonable motorized access while also protecting forest roads and resources and providing for public safety.

“Besides the damage to the forest that occurs following very wet weather, we also have drivers getting stuck in the mud and having to call for help from towing companies to have their vehicles extricated,” Lovejoy said. “We had to find a solution to this problem.”

Beginning this winter, emergency travel restrictions will be implemented when soils are saturated on the Coconino National Forest and on the Williams and Tusayan ranger districts of the Kaibab National Forest. Due to different soil conditions and elevation on the North Kaibab Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest, it will not be included in the new wet weather travel policy.

The wet weather emergency travel restrictions will result temporarily in the closure of many roads and the prohibition of cross-country motorized travel. A backbone system of roads will remain open to allow forest access. The roads selected to remain open will be strategically located to provide reasonable access to the forests and also be designated to sustain a higher level of use.

“What people need to understand is that we won’t be implementing these restrictions any time there is a little bit of precipitation,” Lovejoy said. “This will be done only when soils are saturated and on an emergency basis.”

New Signs Contd.

The wet weather emergency travel restrictions will be implemented in a similar way to fire area closures. Based on conditions on the ground, an official order will be signed by forest management authorizing the restrictions. The restrictions will then be lifted as soon as conditions allow. Just as with fire area closures, wet weather emergency travel restrictions will likely not have to be implemented annually.

Forest travelers will know when they enter an area affected by the wet weather emergency travel restrictions because they will encounter a sign that reads, "Entering wheeled motorized restriction area. Use only roads and trails shown on official map." A second sign will then be posted with a map showing open routes in the area. Motorized travelers will be required to stay on those designated routes until the soils dry out and restrictions have been lifted.

If the wet weather emergency travel restrictions are implemented this winter on the Kaibab or Coconino forests, additional information including maps showing routes to be left open will be posted on the forest website:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino>

Please feel free to call the Happy Jack Information Center at 928-477-2172 or the Blue Ridge Ranger Station at 928-477-2255.



Area Closure on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District

Due to extensive resource damage and in order to protect the beauty of our forest, the Mogollon Rim Ranger District has issued an order for a special area closure prohibiting the use of any type of motor vehicle off National Forest

System roads. The area is roughly east of Highway 260, south of Forest Road 142, west of Forest Road 141 and north of Forest Road 300. This order will remain in effect until September of 2009 when the Travel Management Rule is implemented. Any violation of this prohibition is punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000.00 for individuals, and \$10,000.00 for organizations, and/or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months.

If you would like to view this order and the map showing the closure area please visit the Coconino National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino and click on Current Conditions or please call Blue Ridge Ranger Station at 928-477-2255 or the Happy Jack Information Center at 928-477-2172.

*Have fun and enjoy those special moments with your families!
Till next YEAR! Jean Gilbertson, Editor*

We Need Help!



Blue Ridge Ranger Station is looking for a volunteer to assist with facilities maintenance on the Station. You will need to be able to work outdoors, lift 30-40 pounds, haul the trash trailer to the dump, painting, etc. It would involve working 16-24 hours per week and we will pay \$12 per day. If you are interested please contact Mike Payne at 928-477-2255.

Happy Holidays

From,



*All the Employees at the
Mogollon Rim Ranger District!*