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Caution advised for outdoor enthusiasts

VALE, Oregon – Hunters, off-road enthusiasts, and other adventurers of the great outdoors should make sure they are aware of fire conditions and restrictions in the areas they plan to travel.

“This is one of the most volatile fire seasons in recent history,” said Mike Hartwell, Fire Management Officer for the Bureau of Land Management’s Vale District in southeastern Oregon. The District, which averages around 40,000 acres blackened by fire each year, has already exceeded 200,000 acres this summer.

“Fire restrictions announced yesterday will have a tremendous impact on folks looking to round out their summer activities or take advantage of the pre-fall hunting windows,” said Hartwell. “We want folks to enjoy their public land, but we have to be concerned with their safety first. Conditions are extreme right now, and our resources are stretched; we don’t want to increase the risk of creating additional situations we would need to respond to.”

Yesterday’s restrictions will impact anyone traveling off of improved roads that are maintained and cleared of flammable material. “This is going to particularly impact users of the Virtue Flat Off Highway Vehicle Area,” said Polly Gribskov, an Outdoor Recreation Planner for the Vale District’s Baker Resource Area. “This is a popular time of year at Virtue Flat,” added Gribskov, “but we’ll be posting the site closed until the restrictions are lifted.”

“Hunters are another group who have adapted off-road vehicles to their sport,” said Pat Ryan, Malheur Resource Area Manager. “They’ll need to be aware of the current fire restrictions, which are posted on bulletin boards throughout the district.”

“Even after we get some cooler temperatures and higher humidity, hunters and others should still use caution when enjoying public lands. Planning for a safe return, respecting private property, and keeping gates closed to keep livestock in are all practices we hope people will remember,” said Ryan.

For a current list of fire restrictions on the Vale District, visit their website at www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale or contact the district office at (541) 473-6218.

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