



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**

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**EL PASO MAN SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS OF PROBATION FOR CAUSING  
“LAST CHANCE FIRE” IN LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST**

*Defendant Ordered to Pay \$2.6 Million in Restitution*

LAS CRUCES – Yesterday in Las Cruces federal court, **Rodrigo Ulloa-Esquivel**, 30, of El Paso, Tex., was sentenced to five years of probation and ordered to pay \$2,681,492.04 in restitution for leaving a fire in the Lincoln National Forest unattended. Ulloa-Esquivel, who pled guilty to the misdemeanor offense on October 28, 2011, also must complete 200 hours of community service.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Ulloa-Esquivel was indicted on August 17, 2011 on criminal offenses arising out of a wildfire that burned through the Last Chance Canyon of the Lincoln National Forest in Eddy County, N.M. (Last Chance Fire), in late April and early May of 2011.

In his plea agreement, Ulloa-Esquivel admitted that, on April 24, 2011, he lit toilet paper on fire near a campsite at the Last Chance Canyon in the area known as the Guadalupe Ranger District in the Lincoln National Forest even though he knew that there were fire restrictions in place for that area. Because the wind was blowing hard, sparks from the burning toilet paper spread beyond Ulloa-Esquivel’s ability to control the fire. After Ulloa-Esquivel and his friends tried unsuccessfully to extinguish the fire, they left the area without calling the U.S. Forest Service or local authorities to report the fire. Ulloa-Esquivel also admitted initially denying knowledge of the fire or that he caused the fire, but later admitted to U.S. Forest Service personnel that he started the fire.

According to U.S. Forest Service reports, the Last Chance Fire burned for several days and was declared controlled on May 9, 2011. The fire consumed 53,342 acres and caused damage to four structures in the Sitting Bulls Falls Recreation area located in the Lincoln National Forest.

The case was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Las Cruces Branch Office, and was investigated by the U.S. Forest Service with assistance from the National Park Service and the Eddy County Sheriff's Office. The U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and Queen Volunteer Fire Department participated in the fire suppression effort.

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