

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. FOREST SERVICE CLOSES PARTS OF SMOKEY BEAR RANGER DISTRICT DUE TO FLOODING

Alamogordo, NM (July 29, 2008) – Lincoln National Forest officials are going to close portions of the Smokey Bear Ranger District, due to flood related damage and associated hazards. This includes areas that are north of U.S 70 and west of NM State Highways 48 and 37. There is one localized road closure, Forest Road 9038D north of NM State 380, in the general vicinity of lower Salazar Canyon. There will be an exception to this closure area, the Cedar Creek area where developed Forest Service recreation facilities will remain open, namely the Fitness Trail, Cedar Creek Picnic Area and Pavilion, and Sam Tobias Group Campgrounds 1, 2, and 3. The remaining portion of the Smokey Bear Ranger District that are general north of State Highway 380 and east of Ruidoso will remain open.

Forest officials are asking the public to stay out of the following closed areas: Three Rivers Campground as well as Nogal, Bonito, Eagle (including Ski Run Road State Highway 532), Cedar Creek, Perk/Brady, Grindstone, and Sawmill Canyons.

Road conditions have deteriorated due to unusually heavy rainfall amounts and flooding that occurred in the area. A 300 foot portion of Forest Road 107 that leads to dispersed camping areas past Bonito Lake has been washed away.

Lincoln National Forest and Lincoln County law enforcement officials are aware that there are other Forest visitors that are located beyond washouts and blocked roads. Concerned relatives should contact (575) 257-4116, with the names, vehicle description, and a detailed description of the location of

the affected party. Forest personnel, local agency and public safety are first and foremost during any actions taken during this relief effort.

An Area Closure Order will be effective July 29, 2008, at 8:00 a.m., and will remain in effect until further notice. This Order includes roads, trails and campgrounds.

Many of the major access roads to the identified areas may have been impacted due to flooding. Many culverts are blocked by flood debris resulting in water over the roadways. The area has experienced over nine inches of rain since Friday.

Forest officials are working closely with local law enforcement and emergency management officials to respond to a rapidly changing situation and to provide for public safety. Road crews and Forest employees are currently assessing conditions and are responding to flood damage on major roads. As conditions improve and flood waters recede, crews will work to restore access where it can be done safely. Forest conditions are changing rapidly and crews are in the field assessing the situation and conducting repairs as they can.

For additional information about the Forest Service, please contact the Smokey Bear Ranger District Office at (575) 257-4095.

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