Gila National Forest moves to stage 2 fire restrictions

SILVER CITY, NM — May 18, 2022 — The Gila National Forest will implement forest-wide Stage 2 fire restrictions at 8 a.m. Thursday, May 19, 2022. The restrictions are necessary to reduce human-caused wildfires during periods of high fire danger and persistent severe fire weather conditions. Forest Order #03-06-00-22-004 and Exhibit A are on the forest website: https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/gila/alerts-notices.

Under Stage 2 fire restrictions the following activities are prohibited:
1. Building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire, campfire, or stove fire, including charcoal and briquettes. 36 C.F.R. § 261.52(a).
2. Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three (3) feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of any flammable material. 36 C.F.R. § 261.52(d).
3. Blasting, welding, or operating an acetylene or other torch with open flame. 36 C.F.R. § 261.52(i).
4. Using an explosive. 36 C.F.R. § 261.52(b).
5. Possessing or using a motor vehicle off National Forest System roads, except when parking in an area devoid of vegetation within 10 feet of the roadway and except for parking overnight in Forest Service developed campgrounds and trailheads. 36 C.F.R. § 261.56.

The following acts are prohibited from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.:
1. Operating a chainsaw or other equipment powered by an internal combustion engine.

Acting Gila National Forest Supervisor Michael Martinez said, “We all have a role in preventing human-caused wildfires. It only takes one spark to start a wildfire. We are relying on you to help us prevent wildfires.”

Forest managers use several criteria before deciding to implement fire restrictions. They include fuel moisture levels, local, regional, and national fire preparedness levels, fire activity, expected weather conditions, the potential for increased human-caused ignitions, availability of resources and significant social, political, and economic impacts. Considerations always include discussions to understand impacts and challenges with neighboring units, federal and non-federal.

Stage 2 fire restrictions shall remain in effect until Dec. 31, 2022, or until rescinded, whichever occurs first. Violations are punishable by a fine of not more than $5,000 for individuals and $10,000.00 for organizations and/or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months.

Further information regarding fire restrictions may be obtained at the Gila National Forest Supervisor’s office in Silver City, telephone number 575-388-8201.

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