



Forest Service

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News Release

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Forest Service Takes Steps to Reduce Wildfire Caused by Recreational Shooting in Arid Areas

Phoenix, AZ – May 5, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service, Southwestern Region is enacting a recreational shooting restriction for the Coronado, Prescott and Tonto National Forests to reduce wildfires and to protect the health and safety of employees and communities.

Beginning May 6, 2020 at 5:00 pm and until July 31, 2020 or until rescinded, recreational shooting is prohibited in the Coronado, Prescott, and Tonto National Forests due to current conditions. These forests are experiencing an increase in drying trends of extreme grass fuel loads resulting from above average winter moisture. When you factor in the current pandemic, the assembly of wildland firefighters engaging in suppression efforts becomes a public health concern. Under this restriction, discharging of a firearm, air rifle, or gas gun, except while engaged in a lawful hunt, is prohibited on the listed national forests.

“The decision to implement a shooting restriction is driven by amplified risk of wildfire in areas increasingly vulnerable to drying conditions combined with the likely resource shortage due to COVID-19 mitigation within our fire organization,” said Acting Regional Forester Elaine Kohrman. “This restriction also attempts to reduce smoke emissions that compromise first responder and public respiratory health.”

The Coronado, Prescott, and Tonto National Forests have a history of shooting related fires. Current conditions, in addition to the global pandemic, indicate that shooting will lead to shooting-caused fires if these preventive measures are not taken. Within the last two weeks alone, these forests have experienced seven wildland fires likely caused by recreational shooting, resulting in hundreds of acres burned. As a reminder, in accordance with *36 CFR 261.5(b)*, tracer and incendiary rounds are prohibited on National Forest System Lands. Additionally, exploding targets and fireworks are prohibited on all National Forests and Grasslands located in the Southwestern Region per Order [#03-00-00-19-001](#) dated June 30, 2019.

The following is prohibited under the May 6 shooting restriction order:

- Discharging of a firearm, air rifle, or gas gun, except while engaged in a lawful hunt.

Violating the shooting restriction may result in an appearance in federal court, fines, or other penalties. Forest visitors will still be able to engage in lawful hunting activities. While these restrictions are in place, most of the Coronado, Prescott, and Tonto National Forests are still open for dispersed recreation activities to include hunting, camping and hiking.

Visit the Interactive Visitor Map at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/ivm for more information on available activities. For additional information on COVID-19, go to <https://www.coronavirus.gov>. Information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is available at www.usda.gov/coronavirus. Information on public lands use in Arizona is available at <https://tourism.az.gov/responsible-recreation-across-arizona/>

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