

**GILA
NATIONAL
FOREST**



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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- Bear Fire Closure Area Reduced -

(Silver City, NM – June 29, 2006) - Fire activity has decreased considerably over the last few days in the Gila National Forest. As a result of the moderated fire behavior, Gila National Forest Supervisor, Marcia Andre, has reassessed the status of area closures that have been implemented. Area closures were initially established to ensure public and firefighter safety. A closure for the Bear Fire was implemented June 22, 2006, encompassing an area of approximately 487,000 acres. On Friday, June 30 the closure will be reduced to a portion of the fire's perimeter, which affects approximately 42,000 acres.

"Eighty five percent -- or more than 2 ½ million acres -- of the Forest remains open and we encourage people to visit and enjoy the Gila National Forest. Popular sites like the Catwalk, Quemado Lake, the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, Lake Roberts, and most day-use areas remain open," said Andre.

Starting June 30, landowners and permittees in Willow Creek will be given road access to the closed area by obtaining a **letter of authorization**, which will allow access past the road block near the N-Bar Ranch on State Highway 159 (Forest Road 28), south of Negrito Work Center. A letter of authorization may be obtained at the Reserve Ranger Station, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm. The new area closure will remain in effect until rescinded and it is important to note that other access routes to Willow Creek, via Beaverhead, and Silver Creek Divide remain closed. The area closure notice is posted on the website at:

www2.srs.fs.fed.us/r3/gila/fire/fireclosure.asp

People entering the closed area with appropriate letter of authorization are reminded to watch for hazards that may still exist, including:

- ✓ Falling snags
- ✓ Fire-damaged trees
- ✓ Rolling rocks on hillsides
- ✓ Increased flows in streams and arroyos

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1st add---Bear Fire Closure Reduced

For more information about the current fire activity on the Gila National Forest, contact the Information Office at 388-8245 or visit the website at www.fs.fed.us/r3/gila.

Information about all current federal and state land restrictions and closures in New Mexico and Arizona can be found by visiting the website:

http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/information/firerestrictions/restrictions_closures.htm

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