

**File Code:** 2610

**Date:** June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Route To:** File

**Subject:** *Forest Order – Williwaw and Black Bear Campgrounds Tent and Soft-Sided Camper Use Prohibition*  
**From:** *Jeff E. Schramm – Forest Supervisor*

For the safety of the public, I have decided to issue a Forest Order closing the Williwaw and Black Bear Campgrounds to tent and soft-sided campers. This morning, there was an incident involving black bear activity in the Williwaw Campground that resulted in the destruction of a tent and injuries to a camper. In particular, I understand that this bear jumped on and destroyed a tent within Williwaw Campground. In the incident, a bear ripped into a tent with people inside the tent; luckily, no serious injuries occurred to anyone inside the tent. Nonetheless, this serious incident illustrates why a Forest Order is necessary to mitigate the bear hazard.

Additionally, it is very likely that this bear will continue to engage in dangerous behavior if it has access to tents or soft-sided campers. Accordingly, because of the incident where a tent was destroyed, it is clear that a use restriction on tents and soft-sided campers is necessary to protect the public until the problem bear is destroyed or no longer in the area.

Because there have not been any reports of bears entering or destroying hard-sided campers, it is only necessary to restrict the use of tents and soft-sided campers in the campground at this time.

The closure boundary for Williwaw Campground begins at the intersection of the Portage Highway and Williwaw Campground Road (RTE#47003000), includes Williwaw Campground Loop Road (RTE#4700301), Williwaw Campground Cross Road (RTE#4700302) and consists of the entire campground area. The closure boundary for Black Bear Campground begins at the intersection of the Portage Highway and Black Bear Campground Road (RTE#4700450) and consists of the entire campground area.

I have concluded that this decision is categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act. This action falls within the category identified in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(1) – prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety – and does not require documentation in a decision memo, decision notice or record of decision. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this temporary closure. No CRIA is needed. Implementation of the decision may begin immediately. When making this determination, however, I also considered that imposing use restrictions at the campground would have little or no environmental effects.

Additionally, I note that the Forest Order for the Williwaw and Black Bear Campgrounds was initially issued on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, without following the Order review process specified in Forest Order Handbook 5309.11, § 32.26. However, in “emergency conditions that may threaten public or employee safety, natural resources, or Government property, an Order may be approved by the responsible line officer without prior completion of the above requirements.” FSH 5309.11, § 32.26. Here, I determined that the circumstances requiring a use restriction at the Williwaw and Black Bear Campgrounds qualified as an emergency and that a Forest Order was urgently needed to mitigate a risk of harm to human life or safety. Although I issued the

emergency Order on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 without going through the ordinary review process, the Order will subsequently go through the review process contemplated in FSH 5309.11, Section 32.26 on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

To determine the impacts of the closure order on various user groups, the Glacier Ranger District and/or the Chugach National Forest conducted scoping by reaching out to the campground concessionaire and holding internal conversations with USFS employees with areas of expertise in recreation and wildlife. I also understand that scoping was also conducted with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Division who also recommended a closure.

The area closure will remain in effect until June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024 unless rescinded before that date.

JEFF SCHRAMM  
Forest Supervisor  
Chugach National Forest