

File Code: 2610

Date: June 24th, 2024

Route To: File

Subject: *Forest Order – Williwaw Campground Partial Closure*
From: *Jeff E. Schramm – Forest Supervisor*

For the safety of the public, I have decided to issue a Forest Order closing a portion of the Williwaw Campground. 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. During the incident, a bear ripped into a tent with people inside the tent causing injury to one of the occupants. Luckily, no serious injuries occurred. The same bear has been seen frequenting the area since and a closure to tents and soft-sided campers is already in effect for the area. Nonetheless, this serious incident and the persistence of the bear to remain in the area to obtain food 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 continued access to food within the campground. Accordingly, because of the incident where a tent was destroyed and the bear continuing to use the area, it is clear that a partial closure of the campground is necessary to protect the public until the problem bear is euthanized or no longer in the area.

The closure boundary for Williwaw Campground begins at the Northeast intersection of Williwaw Campground Road (RTE#47003000) and Williwaw Campground Loop Road (RTE#4700301), travelling south on Williwaw Campground Road to its' southeast intersection with Williwaw Campground Loop Road, travelling east on Williwaw Campground Loop Road back to its' intersection with Williwaw Campground Road and consists of the entire campground area within those boundaries, as displayed on the attached map.

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 Williwaw Campground was initially issued on June 24th, 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 Williwaw Campground 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 24th, 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 25th, 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 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 28th, 2024 at 4:00 PM unless rescinded before that date.

JEFF SCHRAMM
Forest Supervisor
Chugach National Forest