



Forest Order No. STF-16-2020-22
Stanislaus National Forest
Temporary Camping, Occupancy, and Use Restrictions

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 36 CFR 261.50(a), and to protect natural resources and provide for public health and safety, the following acts are prohibited within the Stanislaus National Forest. This Order is effective from October 16, 2020, through November 15, 2020.

1. Discharging a firearm, except while engaged in a lawful hunt pursuant to state, federal, or tribal law and regulations. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58(m).
2. Committing any of the prohibited activities listed below within the High and Moderate Fire Hazard Areas, as shown on Exhibit A and described in Exhibit B.

High Fire Hazard Area (Zone A):

- a. Camping, except in open, developed campgrounds. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58(e).
- b. Being in the area after sundown or before sunrise. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58(l).

Moderate Fire Hazard Area (Zone B):

- a. Camping, except in open, developed campgrounds and except in Sand Flat Campground. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58(e).
- b. Being in the area after sundown or before sunrise. 36 C.F.R. § 261.58(l).

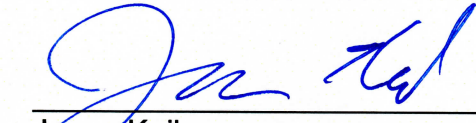
Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 261.50(e), the following persons are exempt from this Order:

1. Persons with Forest Service Permit No. FS-7700-48 (Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order), specifically exempting them from this Order.
2. Any Federal, State, or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of an official duty.

These prohibitions are in addition to the general prohibitions in 36 C.F.R. Part 261, Subpart A.

A violation of these prohibitions is punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment for not more than six months, or both. 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 18 U.S.C. §§ 3559, 3571, and 3581.

Executed in Sonora, CA, this 15th day of October, 2020.



Jason Kuiken
Forest Supervisor
Stanislaus National Forest



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Stanislaus National Forest

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Subject: Forest Order No. STF-16-2020-22, Temporary Camping, Occupancy and Use Restrictions

To: Project Files

From: Jason Kuiken, Forest Supervisor

I have decided to issue Forest Order No. STF-16-2020-22, to continue to prohibit some use and activities on the Stanislaus National Forest (STF). The order includes restrictions concerning where dispersed and developed camping may take place. Additionally, I have decided to temporarily restrict recreational target shooting as an emergency measure to prevent new potential fire starts. This Order will protect natural resources and provide for the public safety of forest visitors by limiting activities, occupancy, and use in high and moderate fire hazard areas within the Forest. The Order also limits the potential for new fire starts. This order is effective from October 16, 2020, through November 15, 2020. It represents a continuation of Forest Order No. STF-16-2020-19, which was effective from September 19, 2020, through October 15, 2020.

California is experiencing an unprecedented and dire fire season. There are 18 National Forests in California, totaling approximately 20 million acres. Currently, 12 of 18 National Forests in the Pacific Southwest Region in California have large fires. Nearly all fires are now large, "complex" fires (a series of fires in close proximity to one another that have burned into a single large unit). In a typical fire season, California will see some 300,000 acres burn. This year, more than 4.2 million acres have already burned statewide.

Extreme weather conditions have made this situation significantly worse this year. Record high temperatures, unprecedented dry lightning events, and multiple heatwaves across the state have made conditions extremely dry and susceptible to fire ignition. For several weeks, temperatures reached over 100 degrees for most of the state, even in areas along the coast that are typically cooler. Extended high temperatures with no moisture have contributed to the continued dry fuel conditions. Temperatures remain 10-15 degrees higher than historic seasonal averages across the state. Locally, while night time temperatures are dropping into the 60's, average daytime temperatures continue to be in the mid 80's with the next few days forecasted to be in the mid 90's. In addition to the heat and high temperatures, fire weather watch conditions (high winds and low humidity) continue.

Nationally, and within California, firefighting resources are operating at maximum capacity and there are significant shortages of resources. Our firefighting organization has been in Preparedness Level 5 (PL5), the highest level of fire response preparedness, for several weeks.



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While the Preparedness Level both nationally and for South / North Ops (CA) recently dropped to level 4, weather events continue and resources remain stretched and unavailable for initial attack. All national Type 1 and Type 2 Incident Management Teams continue to be committed to ongoing incidents and are unavailable to respond to new large-scale wildfires. All fire engines and major firefighting equipment are already assigned to existing fires or positioned to prevent new fire starts from escaping initial attack. This situation means that should additional fires ignite, the agency may not be able to respond in a timely manner, further risking life and property.

The Stanislaus National Forest has experienced significantly increased levels of dispersed camping, which has resulted in an increase in illegal campfires. The potential for new fires to start and burn uncontrollably is extremely high right now. The combination of extreme fire conditions and weather, along with significant shortages in firefighting resources, poses a significant threat to communities and the visiting public. While lawful hunting is recognized as an important activity on the Stanislaus National Forest this time of year, recreational target shooting as a potential fire ignition source across the 898,000 acre forest remains a concern.

National Forests in California have seen record numbers of visitors this summer. Reports indicate that use levels normally associated with peak holidays such as Memorial Day and the 4th of July were seen every day throughout the summer and into the fall. This level of visitation held true through the Labor Day weekend as well. Campgrounds and dispersed use areas are reported as full to capacity and overflowing. Overflow parking from parking areas frequently spill into roadways. Conflicts between use groups have increased, as has criminal activity. Trash and human waste are collecting faster than Forest Service staff are able to clear and clean facilities. These visitor-use levels and related management issues further exacerbate a challenging fire situation creating a heightened level of risk.

In response to the fire and weather conditions – as well as to high visitation – the USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region issued several Regional Orders beginning September 7, 2020. Initially, all southern California National Forests (including the Stanislaus) were closed to visitors (Regional Order No. 20-07). A subsequent order extended the closures to all California National Forests (Regional Order No. 20-08). Upon expiration of both orders, two new Regional Orders (Nos. 20-12 and 20-13) were executed to continue the full closure of all California National Forest system lands. Effective September 18, 2020, Regional Order Nos. 20-14 and 20-15 were executed, continuing some of the same prohibitions. Pursuant to Regional Order Nos. 20-14 and 20-15, Forest Supervisors on several Pacific Southwest Region forests (including the Stanislaus National Forest) have the flexibility to determine locally whether continued restrictions are needed.

Effective September 19, 2020, the Stanislaus National Forest developed and executed a local order (STF-2020-16-019) tied to our historic High, Moderate and Low Fire Hazard Areas (elevational zones). Public visitation and allowable use and activities are tied to the level of fire danger, as represented by these zones. Upon expiration, a new order will be executed that adjusts the allowable occupancy and use given slightly improved conditions (cooler nighttime temperatures). Day use activities will be allowed across the Forest in all (High, Moderate and Low) Fire Hazard Areas (all elevations). Overnight camping will be allowed in open, Developed

Recreation Sites across the Forest in all (High, Moderate and Low) Fire Hazard Areas within the Stanislaus National Forest. Dispersed camping will be allowed only in the Low Fire Hazard Areas (high elevations).

Other considerations that the Stanislaus National Forest took into account in issuing this Order include: to date in 2020, all fires on the Stanislaus NF have been suppressed during initial attack efforts (no large complex fires). While still above seasonal averages, lower daytime temperatures have averaged in the mid 80's, with nighttime temperatures dropping into the 60's. Relative humidity has increased slightly. By implementing the prohibitions identified above and in the Order – while maintaining the ongoing full Regional Emergency Fire Restrictions (Regional Order No. 20-21) forest-wide – staff has determined that public use of Stanislaus National Forest lands can be allowed in a safe manner that protects both natural resources and the visiting public. Many visitors to the Stanislaus National Forest are familiar with the respective fire hazard zones, as these areas represent the Forest's typical fire restriction areas on an annual basis.

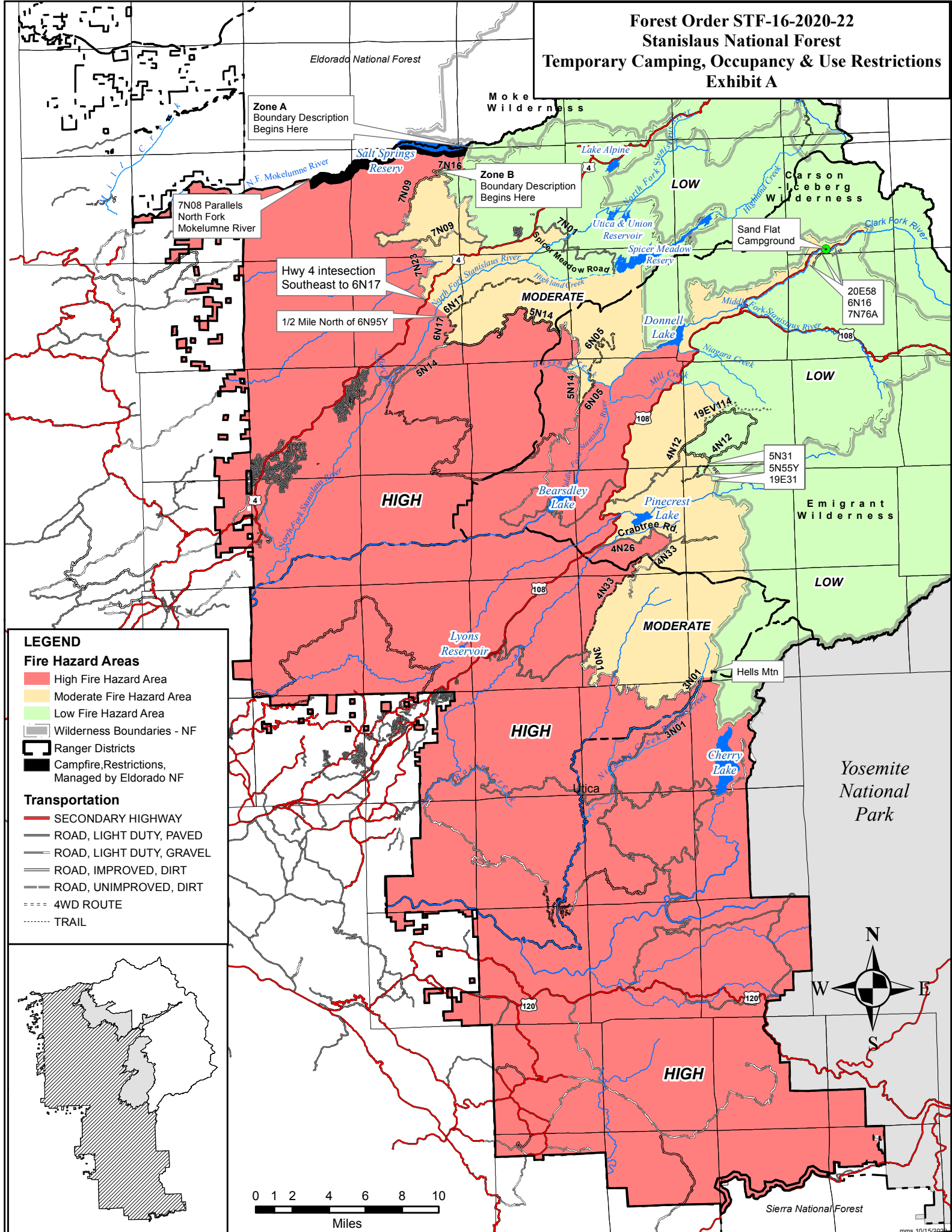
This Forest Order includes an exemption for persons with a Forest Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order (Form FS-7700-48). Authorization under this exemption will only be provided if I or my delegate determine that the risk to personal health and safety is reasonable considering the circumstances of the request. I hereby delegate the authority to sign Form FS-7700-48 granting an exemption to this Forest Order to the Stanislaus National Forest District Rangers.

This order will be in effect until November 15, 2020. It may be extended if weather and fire conditions do not improve and the emergency circumstances continue. Conversely, if weather and fire conditions change that are favorable to allowing additional activities with less restriction, the Order may be terminated sooner.

The purpose of this closure is to protect members of the public. My staff has determined that anticipated effects of this proposed action would be administrative in nature. Contacts with local community leaders and area permittees were favorable. The Forest Service will install signs and post notices to alert the public to these prohibitions.

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) 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. Implementation of the decision may begin immediately.

Forest Order STF-16-2020-22 Stanislaus National Forest Temporary Camping, Occupancy & Use Restrictions Exhibit A



LEGEND

Fire Hazard Areas

- High Fire Hazard Area
- Moderate Fire Hazard Area
- Low Fire Hazard Area

- Wilderness Boundaries - NF
- Ranger Districts
- Campfire Restrictions, Managed by Eldorado NF

Transportation

- SECONDARY HIGHWAY
- ROAD, LIGHT DUTY, PAVED
- ROAD, LIGHT DUTY, GRAVEL
- ROAD, IMPROVED, DIRT
- ROAD, UNIMPROVED, DIRT
- 4WD ROUTE
- TRAIL

