

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RANGER DISTRICT

RE-OPENS TO PUBLIC

Effective Friday, September 21, 2007, the Lewis and Clark National Forest is opening all areas previously closed due to fire activity on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. A few trails will remain closed to stock and motorized travel, and some restrictions on camping will remain in specific areas. Lewis and Clark County Sheriff, Cheryl Leidle and Teton County Sheriff, Keith VanSetten have lifted evacuation orders for the Benchmark, Beaver-Willow Road, Sun Canyon, and North Fork Teton Road areas.

In the vicinity of the Skyland Fire, roads and trails remaining *closed to motorized and stock travel* are:

- Whiterock Pass Road (FDR 9128) from the gate at Palookaville to Whiterock Pass
- Whiterock Creek Trail (#102) from the pass to its junction with Trail #102A
- East Fork Woods Creek Trail (#170) in its entirety.

These trails and road are open to foot traffic only. Restrictions on stock use and motorized travel are intended to protect important fish habitat that was affected by intense fire.

In the Fool Creek Fire area trails that will remain *closed to stock travel* are:

- Blackleaf Trail (#106) in the East Fork Teton drainage from the pass between the Blackleaf and Teton drainages west to its junction with the North Fork Teton Trail (#107)
- North Fork Teton Trail (#107) from its south end at the Teton Canyon Road bridge through the Box Canyon to the West Fork Teton trailhead area
- Washboard Reef Trail (#117) from Washboard Reef east to its junction with Trail #157 in the Olney Creek drainage.

These trails remain closed to stock due to extensive damage to trail tread in steep areas, creating significant hazards to stock users. Hikers on these trails should use caution and be alert for areas where the trail has been undercut due to burned roots and stumps.

In the Ahorn Fire area all areas and trails are open to foot and stock travel.

Camping with stock is *not allowed* within the Ahorn Fire perimeter in order to protect remaining forage and re-growth in important elk transition and winter range. Within the Skyland and Fool Creek Fire perimeters, camping with stock is allowed, but all stock must be fed completely on supplemental feed (hay or feed brought in to the camp). All supplemental feed must be certified weed-seed free. Grazing of stock is not allowed in these areas in order to protect remaining forage and to allow for vegetation recovery in burned areas.

All but 2 campgrounds on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District will open as soon as routine water testing is completed. The West Fork Teton Campground will remain closed due to ongoing hazards from falling trees and fire damage to facilities. The Wood Lake Campground will also remain closed.

Although trails within all 3 fire areas are now open to the public, many trails have not been cleared and may be impassable due to downed timber. Visitors into the fire areas should expect to potentially encounter extensive downfall; even on cleared trails it is likely that trees will continue to fall throughout the season. Visitors are also reminded that chainsaw use is not permitted within Wilderness Areas.

Within burned areas, visitors should be alert to a number of potential hazards created by recent fire activity. These include falling snags or trees, rolling material such as rocks or logs,

and holes from burned out stumps and roots. Traditionally the Rocky Mountain Front experiences significant winds during the fall that may increase these hazards. Localized areas within all 3 fire perimeters still contain some heat, and changes in weather could produce active burning in some areas. If this occurs, some areas could be re-closed.

For updates on trail, area, and campground closures and for the latest information on trail conditions call the Rocky Mountain Ranger District offices in Choteau (406) 466-5341 or Augusta (406) 562-3247.

For more information about fires in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex call the Joint Information Center at 1-866-831-7450.