



## Santa Fe National Forest

11 Forest Lane  
Santa Fe, NM 87508  
505-438-5300

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# News Release

Media Contact: Bruce Hill

505.438.5320

[brucehill@fs.fed.us](mailto:brucehill@fs.fed.us)



## Santa Fe National Forest opens Monday, July 9

**SANTA FE, NM – July 7, 2018 – For Immediate Release.** Due to several days of higher humidity and rain, the Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) will lift the closure order and stage 2 fire restrictions on Monday, July 9 at 8:00 a.m. for the first time since entering full forest closure on June 1.

The forest remained closed for public safety and forest health reasons until conditions improved to acceptable levels, according to forest leadership.

“We noticed conditions starting to improve two weeks ago when moisture levels increased due to higher humidity,” said James Melonas, forest supervisor. “The recent rain is the beginning of what we can expect to be a good monsoon season. The Carson and Cibola National Forests are closely monitoring local conditions to determine the safe timing for the lifting of any closures and restrictions.”

Northern New Mexico’s extreme drought conditions in 2018 helped create the dry conditions that led to the SFNF closure, but the monsoons are soon to remedy the drought across the state.

“Drought outlook has the drought across New Mexico being entirely mitigated through the summer monsoon season,” said Chuck Maxwell, predictive services meteorologist. The drought outlook is an NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) product that can be found online at [http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert\\_assessment/season\\_drought.png](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/season_drought.png).

Forest managers use several criteria to determine when to implement or lift restrictions or closure, including fuel moistures, current and predicted weather, values at risk from wildfire, fire activity levels and available firefighting resources. Another component is public compliance.

“Good public compliance can equate to a significant reduction in the number of human-cause wildfires,” said Lance Elmore, forest fire staff officer. “We had a total of five human-caused fire starts on the Santa Fe since closure began on June 1, but no wildfires resulting from them. We are also appreciative of the public’s patience and understanding throughout the process, and we applaud their efforts to communicate restrictions and closures to others.”

“Although current and expected conditions exist to allow the forest to open for visitor use, managers ask that everyone to please practice fire safety by extinguishing all camp fires,” he said.

Forest personnel request the public’s patience as it will take some time to remove barriers and open gates for forest access Monday. Fire updates are posted on the New Mexico Fire Information website at [www.nmfireinfo.com](http://www.nmfireinfo.com). For more information on the SFNF, go to [www.fs.usda.gov/santafe/](http://www.fs.usda.gov/santafe/), Twitter: @SantaFeNF, Facebook at [www.facebook.com/santafeNF](http://www.facebook.com/santafeNF), or call the main office at (505) 438-5300.

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