



Forest Service

Tonto National Forest

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News Release

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Tonto National Forest Announces Bush Post-Fire Flooding Public Safety Closure

PHOENIX, July 29, 2020 — Today, the Tonto National Forest announced a new closure order as a result of potential flood hazards related to the Bush Fire. The occupancy and use restrictions will be in effect on July 31, 2020 and shall remain in effect until March 31, 2021 or until rescinded. The Bush Fire was declared 100% contained on June 4, 2020 after it burned approximately 192,412 acres of the Tonto. Post-fire flooding and debris flow risks will persist through the Arizona monsoon season, tropical storm season, and winter rains.

The occupancy and use restrictions are as follows:

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 36 C.F.R. § 261.50(a), the following acts are prohibited within the area described in this Order (the “Restricted Area”) and as depicted on the attached map, hereby incorporated into this Order as Exhibit A, all within the Tonto National Forest, Maricopa and Gila Counties, Arizona.

1. Going into or being upon the Restricted Area. 36 C.F.R. § 261.53(e).

On June 20, 2020 a Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team was formed to conduct a rapid assessment of imminent post-fire threats to human life and safety, property, and critical natural or cultural resources on the Tonto. The BAER team conducted modeling and determined that hydrologic response from the burn scar will be significant. The team’s modeling determined that the likelihood of basins producing flows resembling a 100-year or greater event during what would have historically been a 10-year storm event are likely. Likewise, the team determined watersheds on the interior of the burn area will have a greater than 50% likelihood of producing debris flows from a modest rainfall event.

Currently, the team is taking immediate actions in an effort to protect human health and safety, including this closure order. Other actions include the installation of gates on key roads to prevent public entry into high risk areas, installation of signage across the burn scar to warn the public of risks and treatments to protect FR 626.

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The Tonto National Forest recognizes that there are significant impacts to the public as a result of this closure. The closure order is a matter of human life and safety and it is important that the public remain out of restricted areas on the forest.

A map of the closure area and the complete closure order may be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/tonto/alerts-notice>. Note that the closure area does not affect any non-National Forest System roads, trails or lands with the closure boundary.

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