

NEWS



Forest Service

*United States
Department of
Agriculture*

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Lassen National Forest

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For TDD assistance, please dial (530) 252-6624.

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LASSEN NATIONAL FOREST SNOW MOBILE ROUTE RESTRICTIONS IN EFFECT UNTIL MARCH 31, 2004

SUSANVILLE, CA...Lassen National Forest snowmobile routes are closed to vehicles with a GVW of over 1,000 pounds until March 31, 2004. Lassen National Forest has six major designated snowmobile areas with 477 miles of groomed trails on the forest. According to Michael Zunino Patrol Captain for the Lassen, "We are concerned about resource protection and visitor safety." "Wheeled vehicles over 1000 pounds damage the trails and create very hazardous conditions for other users."

Already this year wheeled vehicles have damaged several miles of trails near Fredonyer. Although no one was reportedly injured in this incident, future violators may not be as lucky. Violation of the closure area is not only dangerous, but it can be costly as well. The punishment for violation of a closure area is up to a \$5,000 for an individual, \$10,000 for an organization or imprisonment for not more than six months or both in addition to the cost associated with restoring the trail. Once a wheeled vehicle has damaged a snowmobile trail it is very costly to attempt to restore the trail and the forest has a very limited budget to maintain the trails.

Funding for the snowmobile areas comes from the State of California Off Highway Division. According to Zunino "This funding allows the Lassen to maintain one of the largest groomed snowmobile trail systems in California."

Visitors are reminded there are also areas of the forest in which vehicles of any type are restricted such as the designated wilderness areas.

Lassen National Forest visitors are fortunate to find three wilderness areas within the boundaries for visitors to enjoy peace and solitude. The wilderness areas are roughly 10 percent of the forestland. Operating mechanized vehicles of any kind in a wilderness can bring violators costly fines and even jail time. The fine can be as high as \$5,000 and six months in jail. In previous years, snowmobile operators have been prosecuted for knowingly venturing into our wilderness areas. With over 1.2 million acres, Lassen National Forest has enough space for all kinds of outdoor recreation. Snowmobile travel is also restricted in Lassen Volcanic National Park.

Interestingly, the Lassen National Forest has over 3,600 miles of roads of which only 12 percent is closed annually during the snow season to normal vehicles. The remaining 3,200 miles in the forest road system remains open for all uses. Drivers are cautioned that forest roads can be easily damaged during the winter months and drivers may encounter snowdrifts or other obstacles unexpectedly. Caution is always advised during winter travel in the forest.

“Make sure you tell someone where you are going and when you will be back.” And in the event you do get stranded, “Stay with your vehicle.” urges Forest Service Safety Manager and Lassen County Search and Rescue Team volunteer Robert Trussell. “It is much easier to find a vehicle in the forest than a person on foot.” Vehicles can also provide some shelter from the elements. While waiting for help to arrive, signal your distress by using emergency flashers and tying a handkerchief or flagging on the antenna or mirror. Be sure to keep the tailpipe clear and a downwind window open while periodically running the engine for warmth.

Additional information about restricted areas or current conditions can be obtained from the following offices:

Eagle Lake Ranger District, located at: the corner of Highway 36 and Eagle Lake Road, or call (530) 257-4188.

Almanor Ranger District, located at: 900 East Highway 36 in Chester, or call (530) 258-2141.

Hat Creek Ranger District, located at: 43225 East Highway 299, Fall River Mills, or call (530) 336-5521.

Lassen National Forest Headquarters, located at 2550 Riverside Dr. Susanville, CA 96130 or call (530) 257-2151.

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