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Fire Restrictions Announced

VALE, Oregon -- Fire season and the recreation season are both upon us. To ensure continued enjoyment of public lands, visitors should be aware of fire use restrictions in the areas they travel this summer.

The Bureau of Land Management, Vale District Office, has announced public fire use restrictions will take effect Friday, June 8, for all BLM-managed public lands within Malheur County and within one mile of the Snake River beginning at Farewell Bend downstream (north) to Fisher Gulch in Asotin County, Washington, and all BLM-managed public lands within one mile of the Wallowa River and the Grande Ronde River from Minam to its confluence with the Snake River.

According to Tracy Skerjanec, Vale District's acting Fire Management Officer, the restrictions that are going into effect are due to low fuel moistures due partly to the mild winter, light snow pack, and light spring rains. "We constantly evaluate the fuel conditions in the district, and we've seen the levels drop significantly in the past couple of weeks. Although we've had cooler temperatures and some moisture the past couple of days, we have to expect we'll be seeing the return of higher temperatures and drier weather right on its heels. The light fuels that characterize rangeland in this area take very little time to dry out when that warm weather returns."

The restrictions will be posted in areas throughout the district and prohibit lighting fireworks or other pyrotechnic devices. Campfires are only permitted within existing metal fire rings located at Chukar Park near Juntura; Slocum Creek Campground, Riverside, Oasis, and Rome Launch site also in Malheur County; Spring Recreation site on the Brownlee Reservoir; Westfall, Airstrip, and Bob Creek on the Hells Canyon Reservoir; and Carters Landing on Oxbow Reservoir.

In addition to the restrictions, other requirements are specified in the posted orders. Liquefied and bottled gas stoves and heaters are permitted; however, when used outside of developed recreation sites they must be used within an area at least ten feet in diameter that is clear of all flammable materials. When operating a motorized vehicle on public lands, you must carry a shovel at least 26 inches in length with at least an eight-inch blade, and either a one-gallon container of water or a fully charged 2.5 pound fire extinguisher.

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"We still want people to enjoy their public lands," said Skerjanec, "but we have to balance that with reasonable restrictions to prevent wildfire. As the season progresses, it may be necessary to broaden the area covered by the restrictions, or put additional restrictions in place. We will continue to keep the public informed as situations change."

For more information on current restrictions within the Vale District BLM, visit the Vale District website at www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale or contact Debbie Lyons at 473-6218.

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