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# News Release

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## Area Closures on Tonto National Forest Begin Wednesday, May 23 due to Extreme Fire Conditions

*Fireworks are ALWAYS Prohibited*

**PHOENIX, May 21, 2018 — For Immediate Release.** Public safety concerns due to drought conditions, hot temperatures and increased fire danger are causing the Tonto National Forest to implement two area closures beginning at 6:00 am, on Wednesday, May 23, 2018. Areas outside of the closures will remain at Stage 2 fire restrictions.

The area closures will be in these general areas and will include all Tonto National Forest lands within the boundaries:

1. All Tonto National Forest Land north of Payson to the Forest boundary (Mogollon Rim) between the White Mountain Apache Reservation on the eastern boundary, and the Coconino National Forest on the western boundary. The southern boundary of the closure will start at the Fossil Creek Trailhead and head southeasterly along the powerline corridor to Arizona State Highway 87 into Payson and then follow Arizona State Highway 260 east from Payson, along National Forest System Road (NFSR) 405 and NFSR 405A to the National Forest System Trail 178 east along Haigler Creek to the White Mountain Apache Reservation.
2. All National Forest System Lands, roads and trails within the Mt. Ord, Four Peaks and Three Bar Wildlife areas.

National Forest System Road 583 from State Highway 87 will remain open for access to Tonto Natural Bridge State Park. The Tonto Creek and Canyon Creek Fish Hatcheries operated by the Arizona Game and Fish Department will be closed for public access.

Arizona State highways 87, 260 and 188 are open for public travel.

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County roads through the Tonto National Forest remain open unless the road is specifically closed by the agency managing the road. All national Forest System roads and trails within the area described above are closed.

Owners and leases of private lands within the boundaries of the described areas may travel to and from their private property.

The RV Dump site on the west side of State Highway 188 at Cholla Bay will remain open during regular business hours.

The Tonto National Forest wants concerned citizens to know that forest closures are not taken lightly, as they affect many people, businesses, partner agencies, important restoration and other work on the forest, and the public. When forest closures are in effect, everyone is prohibited from entering the forest including Forest Service personnel, unless they are responding to a wildfire or other emergency or patrolling to ensure enforcement of the closure.

Work on thinning and other forest and watershed restoration projects ceases under a forest closure. Partner agencies, organizations, concessionaires, outfitters, permit holders, and contractors, including utilities, are all prohibited from entering the forest to even make repairs or work on infrastructure running through the national forest. Only emergencies or other very limited exceptions are made.

“These area closures are to provide for public and firefighter safety during the extreme fire danger currently being experienced in central Arizona,” stated Don Nunley, Fire Staff Officer for the Tonto National Forest. “We continue to remind the public that fireworks and other incendiary devices are always prohibited on public lands, and that target shooting remains prohibited under Stage II Fire Restrictions still in effect for the remainder of the Forest.”

**Fines & punishments for violating fire restrictions/closures:**

- Violating Stage II fire restrictions or going into a closed area is a violation that carries a mandatory appearance in federal court.
- Violation of these restrictions is punishable as a Class B misdemeanor, which means a fine of up to \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment of up to six months, or both.
- Fines and punishments are determined by a federal court judge.

**For more information on:**

- Fire Restrictions in Arizona <https://firerestrictions.us/az/>
- Fire Restrictions on the Tonto National Forest <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/tonto/alerts-notices>
- Fires in Arizona <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/?state=3>

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