

Stage 1 fire restrictions are now in place on the whole of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests. These were announced as a small wildfire burned near Lake City Wednesday.

Lightning sparked the Groundhog Park Fire about 20 miles east of Lake City in the Los Pinos drainage on the GMUG, rural Saguache County.

As of Wednesday night, it had burned about 1 acre. Spread potential was deemed moderate to high as the fire burned through dead and downed spruce beetle-kill timber on steep terrain.

No structures were threatened and although the Cebolla Trail and Forest Road 790 remained opened, people are reminded to be aware of fire traffic and avoid the area.

Previously, only the Uncompahgre Plateau and Fruita Division of the GMUG were under restrictions.

Under Stage 1 fire restrictions, these activities are prohibited:

- Igniting, building, attending, maintaining or using a fire (includes fires fueled by charcoal or briquettes) outside of a permanent metal or concrete fire pit or grate that the Forest Service has installed and maintained at its developed recreation sites (campgrounds and picnic areas).

Exception: The use of a stove or grill solely fueled by liquid petroleum fuels, or a fully enclosed metal stove, grill or sheep herder type stove with a chimney at least 5 feet in length and a mesh screen spark arrestor with a screen opening of one-quarter inch or less.

- Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, or in a developed recreation site, or while stopping in an area at least 3 feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials.

- Operating a chainsaw without an effective and properly installed USDA- or Society of Automotive Engineers-approved spark arrestor, a chemical pressurized fire extinguisher (with a minimum 8 oz. capacity and rating of 2A) kept with the operator and a round point shovel with an overall length of at least 35 inches readily available for use.
- Blasting, welding, or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame without being in a cleared area of at least 10 feet in diameter and keeping a chemical pressurized fire extinguisher (with a minimum 8 oz. capacity and rating of 2A) with the operator.
- Using an explosive. This includes but is not limited to fuses, blasting caps, fireworks, rockets, exploding targets, tracers and incendiary ammunition.
- Personal, portable wood or charcoal burning fire pits/rings, often made of stainless steel, are not allowed under these restrictions. Campfires are only allowed in USDA-approved and installed fire pits/grates, or gas-fueled devices with an on/off switch.
- Fireworks are never allowed on federally managed lands.

Violating of these regulations is punishable as a class B misdemeanor, by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment of not more than six months, or both. Anyone negligently or willfully starting a wildland fire could also be held responsible for the costs of that fire.

For up-to-date general information on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests contact:

- Forest Supervisor's Office – Delta – 970- 874-6600;
- Grand Valley Ranger District – Grand Junction – 970- 242-8211;
- Ouray Ranger District – Montrose – 970- 240-5300;
- Gunnison Ranger District – Gunnison – 970- 641-0471;

- Norwood Ranger District – Norwood – 970- 327-4261;
- Paonia Ranger District – Paonia – 970- 527-4131.

For information and updates on current fire restrictions, wildfire and prescribed burns on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests, call the GMUG Fire Information line at 970-874-6602.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area also on Wednesday joined the list of places where Stage 1 restrictions are in effect, following unincorporated Montrose, Delta and San Miguel counties' similar declarations.

These restrictions remain in effect until further notice.