

## **DECISION MEMO**

### **U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE – FOREST SERVICE**

#### **FOREST CLOSURE ORDER SANTIAGO FIRE AREA 02 08 01**

#### **CLEVELAND NATIONAL FOREST SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

### **DECISION**

It is my decision to issue a Forest Order authorizing a continuation of a portion of last years temporary closure of the Santiago Fire burn area on the Trabuco Ranger District. This order also includes a class of persons exempt from the Order:

- (1) Persons with a permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
- (2) Owners or lessees of land in the closure area.
- (3) Residents in the closure area.
- (4) Any Federal, State, or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of an official duty.

The new closure area is described on the Exhibit A (attached) and is shown on the attached map (Exhibit B). The closure will be in effect from November 14, 2008 through November 13, 2009. It will address public health and safety concerns and will also serve to protect forest resources and critical watersheds located within the fire area.

### **NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

There is a need for this action because of the threat to human life and resource values due to Santiago wildfire. An emergency situation was identified as a result of the fire. There are hazards known and unknown within the fire area that threaten public health and safety.

An additional threat to public safety created by this fire is flash flooding caused by loss of vegetative resources. The time frame of this closure typically includes severe monsoonal thunderstorms that can result in some flash flooding. Although re-vegetation is occurring over most of the burned area, the vegetative resources have not progressed enough to lessen the probability of severe flash flooding in the burn area and adjoining areas.

In addition to the public health and safety aspect of the Santiago Fire there numerous archeological, historical, and culturally relevant sites have been exposed by the fire. Many of these sites are cataloged; however, numerous other sites have not been surveyed.

The topography of the area is steep with sensitive soils. The topography combined with sensitive soils invite erosion when traversed by foot or mechanical means.

The continuation of a closure in the burned area is felt to be the most effective method to reduce the potential for loss of life, and loss of significant physical, and cultural resource values on the forest.

There is also a need to provide for the viability of many projects and businesses currently in operation within the proposed Closure area.

### **REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION**

This decision is categorically excluded from documentation under Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 31.1b(1) – Orders issued pursuant to 36 CFR Part 261 – Prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety.

As a result of the above-mentioned analyses, I find there are no extraordinary circumstances that might cause the action to have significant environmental effects; therefore the proposed action is excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Assessment. Extraordinary circumstances would include but are not limited to negative impacts on the following:

**1. Steep slopes or highly erosive soils.**

This action will promote retention of natural vegetation that will help stabilize the steep slopes and highly erosive soils located within the closure area.

**2. Threatened and Endangered species or their critical habitat.**

One of the reasons for this action is to protect threatened and endangered species, and their habitats, located within the closure zone.

**3. Flood plains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds.**

This action will minimize impacts on flood plains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds within the closure area.

**4. Congressionally designated areas, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study areas, or National Recreation Areas.**

There are two congressionally designated Wilderness Areas within the closure area. Protection of these areas will be enhanced by the closure area.

**5. Inventoried roadless areas.**

There are inventoried road less areas within the closure area. Protection of these areas will be enhanced by the closure area.

**7. Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites or historic properties or areas.**

One of the reasons for this action is to protect Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites or historic properties, located within the closure area.

**SCOPING**

Press releases regarding fire activity and the area closure were posted in several local news papers and aired on local radio and television. Forest personnel were interview by local radio and television.

No significant issues were raised during these scoping sessions.

Public information meetings were not conducted due to the exigency of the current situation. Coordination with the following co-operating agencies will be conducted prior to implementation of the closure order:

- |    |                        |   |
|----|------------------------|---|
| 1. | Orange County          | Fire Departments<br>Sheriff's Department  |
| 2. | State of California    | Department of Fish and Game<br>Highway Patrol<br>Department of Transportation (Cal Trans) |
| 3. | Other National Forests | Cleveland NF<br>San Bernardino NF<br>Los Padres NF  |

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. No Action

Under this alternative, significant impact to human life as well as resource values of concern will occur.

2. Area Closure

Under this alternative, a Forest Order will be issued that will promote public health and safety and protect Forest resources.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The closure will not pose an impact or effect on resource values. In fact, it will protect human life, and Forest resources.

The closure will limit public use of the area, most specifically the recreation use of the area. It is designed to prohibit unauthorized use of the area. Visitors whose values and traditions involve the use of activities prohibited in the Closure Area will be directed by Forest Service personnel to areas where those activities are authorized

### **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS.**

This action is consistent with management direction (Cleveland National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan) as required by the National Forest Management Act (FSM 1922.41 and FSH 1909.12).

### **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

This action may be implemented immediately.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES**

This action is not subject to review or appeal under the requirements of 36 CFR 215.8(4).

Done at San Diego, California, this 13th day of November, 2008.

*/s/William Metz*

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William Metz  
Forest Supervisor, Cleveland National Forest

Exhibit A

**Santiago Fire Closure Area**

The Santiago Fire Closure Area is all National Forest System lands contained within the following area:

Beginning at the intersection of the Joplin Trail (Forest Trail No. 6W02) and the National Forest Boundary in the SE ¼ of Section 36, Township (T) 5 South, Range (R) 7 West, San Bernardino Base and Meridian (SBBM), then continuing west and north along the Forest Boundary to its intersection with Silverado Canyon County Road, then continuing east along Silverado Canyon County Road to its intersection with the Maple Springs Road (Forest Road No. 6S04), then continuing east along the southern and western edges of Maple Springs Road to its intersection with the North Main Divide Road (Forest Road No. 3S04), then continuing south along the western edge of the North Main Divide Road to its intersection with Section 30 of T 5 South, R 6 West SBBM, then continuing west and then south along the northern and western edges of Section 30, T 5 South, R 6 West SBBM and the western edge of Section 31, T 5 South, R 6 West SBBM to its intersection with the Joplin Trail, then continuing southwest along the Joplin Trail to the starting point.

**Exhibit B**  
**Santiago Fire Closure Area**