



File Code: 1600

Date: July 2, 2004

Dear Friend of Los Padres National Forest:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of a decision I made recently to prohibit recreational target shooting in Los Padres National Forest until the conclusion of the 2004 fire season. You are receiving this letter because either you asked to be on our mailing list to receive target shooting or hunting-related information, or because we believe your business is associated with hunting or target shooting in some way. This letter is being distributed to approximately 350 contacts in Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Kern and Los Angeles Counties.

As you know, we are experiencing extreme fire conditions this year in Los Padres National Forest, including extraordinarily dry vegetation resulting from an extended drought. All five of the Los Padres District Rangers, as well as my fire staff officers, have expressed great concern about the fire danger in the forest. For this reason, on June 9, 2004, I issued a Forest Order imposing additional fire restrictions forest-wide, including the prohibition of recreational target shooting until the close of the official fire season. My decision to prohibit recreational target shooting is due, in part, to the fact that target shooting has caused a number of wildfires in the forest over the past several years, including ones that were very large and costly.

Under the temporary fire restrictions imposed on June 9, target shooting is now prohibited at all but two locations within the forest: the Winchester Gun Club (www.wcgc.org, 805-964-5606) in Santa Barbara County and the Ojai Valley Gun Club (www.dock.net/ovgc/) in Ventura County. Both of these facilities operate under special use permit to the Forest Service and are available for use by the general public at scheduled times. Contact the clubs for additional information. There are also many commercial target shooting ranges in communities near the national forest.

I want to emphasize that this restriction on recreational target shooting does not prohibit hunting with a valid California hunting license. We are hearing that there is some confusion within the hunting community regarding the effect of the target shooting prohibition on hunting. We would greatly appreciate your help in reaching both recreational target shooters and hunters with the correct information. We will issue a second news release next week to remind the public of the closures. As with many signs in the national forest, the fire restrictions signs are being vandalized or stolen about as quickly as we can post them, and that is adding to the communication problem.

Enclosed please find:

- Forest Order 04-10-5100-2, dated June 9, 2004;
- Our June 9, 2004 news release announcing fire restrictions, including target shooting;
- A flyer summarizing the fire restrictions that will be posted in English and Spanish throughout the forest.

Your local District Ranger will be happy to speak with you regarding conditions in your area:

- Mt. Pinos Ranger District – Tom Kuekes, 661-245-3731
- Ojai Ranger District – John Bridgwater, 805-646-4348
- Santa Barbara Ranger District – Linda Riddle, 805-967-3481
- Santa Lucia Ranger District – Kathleen Phelps, 805-925-9538
- Monterey Ranger District – John Bradford, 831-385-5434
- Public Affairs Office – Kathy Good, 805-961-5759

Sincerely,

/s/ GENE BLANKENBAKER
Forest Supervisor

