Forest Service News Release

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Hazard Tree Removal Provides Free Fuelwood to the Community

Permits available at select locations

Santa Fe, NM, July 5, 2023 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and the New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Forestry Division have teamed up to remove hazard trees from the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon burn scar area in the Santa Fe National Forest. These dead and down trees are now available as free fuelwood for public collection with permit.

Following the 2022 fire, both agencies identified areas within the burn scar that could pose a risk to hikers and recreationists. Starting in June, removal began along Forest Service roads in the Johnson Mesa, Walker Flats, and Capulin areas of the Santa Fe National Forest. Local northern New Mexico companies were contracted to use a mix of hand crews and machinery to cut and pile the hazard-identified trees.

"We started by identifying the trees that were most likely to fall, blocking roads and making travel through the forest for recreation and recovery activities difficult and dangerous" said Shannon Atencio, Las Vegas District Forester for New Mexico Forestry Division. "Hazard tree removal is a critical step in the post-fire process, and we're working hard to ensure that public safety remains a top priority."

The public is advised that hazard trees still exist throughout other areas of the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon burn scar. These trees can often but not always be identified as having charred or burned trunks and no new growth. Their root systems and internal circulation may have been compromised and may cause them to fall under strong gusts of wind. Additionally, large branches may break and fall from the trees' trunks. To learn more characteristics of hazard trees, click here.

“This is the first step in restoring safe access to the Santa Fe National Forest” said Shaun Sanchez, Forest Supervisor for Santa Fe National Forest. “It will not only support future restoration work in the area but expand traditional use of the forest by the community.”

The Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) is distributing free personal-use fuelwood permits at these locations:

- Las Vegas Ranger Station – 1926 7th Street, Las Vegas, NM 87701 – 505-425-3534
- Pecos Ranger Station – 32 South Main Street, Pecos, NM 87522 – 505-757-6121
- Santa Fe Ranger Station – 11 Forest Lane, Santa Fe, NM 87508 – 505-483-5300

Please note the following:

- Permits will be required to collect this fuelwood
- Permits for this wood will be free and issued in 5 cord increments per household
- Permit holders are highly encouraged to check in with Ranger station before arrival due to the possibility of forest closures. (This may be implemented due to safety concerns.)

District dead and down fuelwood permits are valid throughout the Santa Fe National Forest, except in designated wilderness and other excluded areas. Fuelwood maps are posted on the SFNF website.

Permit holders will receive load tags, a fuelwood cutting map, and guidelines for harvesting the wood. Firewood permit holders should also make sure they have the appropriate equipment to harvest the wood and safely transport it home including nails or some other method to secure load tags to the product permitted. Forest Service staff may be in the cutting areas to check permits and answer questions.

Permit holders are advised to check with the local Ranger District office or the New Mexico Department of Transportation website for current road and weather conditions. As a reminder, only travel on roads designated on the Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) unless the permit specifies otherwise. MVUMs are available for download and paper maps are free at all District Ranger offices and SFNF Forest Headquarters.

For more information about New Mexico state programs, check out the New Mexico Forestry Division website or follow them on Twitter and Facebook.

Stay up to date on Santa Fe National Forest activities via the SFNF website and following the forest on Facebook and Twitter.

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