



EMERGENCY CLOSURE ORDER OF THE FOREST SUPERVISOR
BWCAW Spice lake Wildfire Closure Order
ON THE SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST

Effective June 16, 2023

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Order NO: 09-09-23-03

Q. Why is there going to be a closure for such a small wildfire?

A. No two fires are alike, it is about the complexity of the fire. And due to the complexity of the Spice Lake fire, the closure is necessary. These are not normal circumstances, the drought, warm temperatures, unpredictable high winds and fuel loads are creating a dangerous condition for our firefighters and the recreating public. In addition, the fire is in a unique area of the Forest – a designated Wilderness, which is managed differently. As we learned during the Greenwood fire, the closure order is needed to prioritize safety.

Additional factors considered for this closure include but are not limited to: the area being highly remote, it has limited communication capacity, it takes an extended length of time to paddle the area, the capacity for extreme fire behavior and excessive fuel conditions all lend to a large fire growth potential. These factors combined require a large closure area until we have complete containment.

Q. Are there going to be cancellations of permits on the BWCAW?

A. The forest has contacted the cooperators and current BWCAW permit holders with permits for Moose, Snowbank, Seagull, Saganaga and Kek trail east and west entry points and have encouraged them to seek alternative experiences. On June 19, the forest will review the permit levels and make any adjustments as needed.

Q. I used a cooperator for my permit for this area, what do I do?

A. Contact your cooperator to discuss your trip and possible options, permits in other areas are still available.

Q. Which points of entry are affected by this Closure order?

A. Although one can access this area by several entry points, Moose Lake, Saganaga Lake, Seagull Lake, Kekekabic Trail (West) and Snowbank are the entry points that most people use to travel to the area affected by the closure order.

Q. How long will the closure be in place?

A. Public lands closures help to reduce interference with emergency crews and allow for fire suppression and burned area recovery. The Forest Closure Order is effective June 16, and will remain in effect until the fire is declared out, unless sooner rescinded. The Forest wants to express gratitude for the public's patience as we work to reopen these special places as quickly as safely possible.

Please remain vigilant while out on your public lands. Fuel conditions remain very dry and new fire starts are possible. Help us thank firefighters, and protect your community from new, human-caused fires by following the public use restrictions that are still in place. There is a campfire restriction in place across the forest.



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Q. How do I find daily updates or more about the Spice Lake Wildfire?

A. Go to Inciweb for this incident can be found at <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/mnsuf-spice-lake-fire> You will find information on other wildfires on this website as well.

Q. How many campsites will be affected by this closure on the BWCAW? And are there permits available for other points of entry?

A. There are 80 campsites that are affected.

Yes, there are still permits available at other points of entry. We are encouraging people to seek alternate locations for your visit, either on the BWCAW or at any of the 23 developed campgrounds and 18 rustic campgrounds. There are 254 backcountry campsites outside the wilderness that offer remote paddling, camping and fishing. Here you can experience solitude without reservations, fees or permits and have similar amenities that you would find in a Wilderness campsite. Many backcountry campsites are located on canoe routes outside the BWCAW. State forests and parks and county lands are also available for recreation.

Q. Why isn't the Forest Service using a Full Suppression approach to this wildfire?

A. The Forest Service is using a full suppression approach. By Forest Service policy, every fire receives a strategic, risk-based response appropriate for the circumstances and associated threats and opportunities. Each strategy uses the full spectrum of management actions that consider fire and fuel conditions, weather, values at risk and resource availability.

Fire danger is high from Duluth through Arrowhead due to drought conditions, warm weather, and high winds. Fire danger is likely to remain high through the end of June. In addition to the weather conditions, this area includes high fuel loads, due to spruce budworm affected trees – both standing and laying down that can increase fire behavior.

Because of these factors, the Type 3 team is prioritizing firefighter safety using indirect tactics to suppress the fire. These are not normal conditions, and the Forest Service is responding in the best way possible.

Q. Can I fly a recreational drone over the wildfire to take photos?

A. No, flying drones or Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) within or near a wildfire without permission could cause injury or death to firefighters and hamper their ability to protect lives, property, and natural cultural resources.



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Individuals who fly UAS without authorization over wildfires may be violating federal, state, and/or local laws, regulations, and ordinances, whether a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) is in place or not. All unauthorized UAS flights over wildfires on National Forest System lands will be reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and law enforcement agencies.

Individuals who have been determined to have endangered manned aircraft or people on the ground with a UAS and/or interfered with wildfire suppression may be subject to civil penalties, including fines of up to \$25,000, and potentially criminal prosecution.

Q. How is the current air quality situation affecting wildfire operations?

A. Currently there is an air quality alert in affect through June 16 for northern and central Minnesota due to wildfire smoke from Canada. Air quality is expected to reach the read AQI category in northern and central Minnesota, which is unhealthy for everyone.

Safety is our number one priority and, in some instances, aviation resources like planes, helicopters, etc. may not be used in suppressing a fire because of continued air pollution from Canadian wildfires.