



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Superior National Forest

Forest Service News Release

Christine Kolinski-Public Affairs Specialist

christine.kolinski@usda.gov

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/superior>

Superior National Forest Adjusts Closure Area for Wood Lake Wildfire Within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

Adjusted Closure Order 09-09-24-07 effective September 17, 12:01am CT.

Duluth, MN. September 16, 2024 — The Superior National Forest is adjusting the [Emergency Forest Closure Order 09-09-24-07](#) established for the Wood Lake Fire, beginning on Tuesday, September 17, 2024, at 12:01 a.m., within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). The adjusted Exhibit A-List of Closed Areas and Exhibit B-Closure Map, have removed the following recreation areas from the closed area:

- Wind Lake
- Wind Bay to Wind Lake portage
- Wind Lake to Washte Lake portage
- Wind Lake to Moose Lake portage

The Forest Order closures include:

- All campsites, portages, rivers, and lakes within the current updated closure order (see Exhibit A), including but not limited to 9 locations as noted.

The Forest Service has notified permit holders, cooperators and outfitters and is encouraging permit holders to seek an alternate area of the BWCAW or consider non-wilderness areas of the SNF (see below) for similar experiences. At this time overnight paddle and day use is not permitted in the closure area.

We understand that this will impact visitors, cooperators, and communities near the restricted area. This emergency closure is necessary for the safety of our visitors, our wilderness rangers and our firefighters.

Northern Minnesota continues to experience drought conditions, causing active and increasing fire across the landscape. Forest staff are managing suppression actions on the Wood Lake Fire with additional resources on standby.

Beyond the closures for the Wood Lake Fire, the Forest is open to the public and no other restrictions apply.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

A. A closure order is needed to prioritize safety: Firefighter and public safety are the top priorities. Superior National Forest (NF) management also considered other factors that determined the need for a necessary closure order including above average temperatures, forest drought conditions, extended forecast conditions, availability of firefighting resources, and vegetative fuel conditions in and around the

fire area. In addition, the fire is in a unique area of the Forest – a designated Wilderness, which is managed differently.

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

A. The Superior NF has contacted the cooperators and current BWCAW permit holders with permits for Wood Lake-Entry Point#26. Wood Lake permittees and day use visitors are encouraged to seek alternative experiences. Since this is an evolving incident, the Superior NF 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. The following areas are restricted:

BWCAW Entry Point: #26-Wood Lake.

Lakes: Wood, Hula, Good, and Indiana

Portages: Wood Lake Entry Point Parking Lot to Wood Lake, Wood Lake to Hula Lake, Hula Lake to Good Lake, Good Lake to Good Creek, Good Lake to Hoist Bay (Basswood Lake), Good Lake to Indiana Lake, Indiana Lake to Basswood Lake, and Indiana Lake to Wind Bay Creek (Wind Bay, Basswood Lake)

See closure order and map for more information.

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 original Forest Closure Order was effective September 12, 2024 and the updated one is effective September 17, 2024. The order will remain in effect until the fire is declared out, unless sooner rescinded. The Superior NF 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.

Q. How do I find more information about the Wood Lake Wildfire?

A. Go to Inciweb for this incident can be found at: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/mnsuf-wood-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 now 9 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. 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. In addition, drones are prohibited from launching, landing or being controlled from within designated wilderness areas.

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. Drones are not legal within federally designated wilderness areas nationwide.

Q. What does it mean by the Forest Service is using Full Suppression tactics for 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 and above normal warm weather. Fire danger is likely to remain high for the next few weeks. 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.

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

A. Canadian wildfires are contributing to some decreased air quality conditions across northern and central Minnesota. Air quality is currently GOOD for the Ely area. For more information on air quality where you live, see: <https://www.airnow.gov/>

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.

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 still have similar amenities to that of a BWCAW campsite. Many backcountry campsites are located on canoe routes outside the BWCAW. State forests and parks and county lands are also available for recreation.

For more information on recreation alternatives outside the BWCAW, please visit: [Superior National Forest - Water Activities:Boating - Non-Motorized \(usda.gov\)](#) For a list of canoe routes with backcountry campsites in the Superior National Forest, visit: [Canoeing 2012 rev 0415 final.pub \(usda.gov\)](#)

The Superior National Forest also offers 23 developed campgrounds and 18 rustic campgrounds. Rustic campgrounds are free of charge and available first come, first served year-round. Fee campgrounds are open May – September and may be reserved at Recreation.gov. See the [Forest website](#) for more information.

For additional information regarding fire-related and/or forest closures and updates:

- Inciweb for this incident can be found at <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/mnsuf-wood-lake-fire>.
- [SNF Forest Orders](#)
- Superior National Forest general fire information: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/superior/fire>
- To sign up for our Superior NF newsletter and news, including fire information: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/superior/home/?cid=FSEPRD1115779>