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**(Neb.)-Pine Ridge Ranger District Forest Closure Order Still In Effect, Bessey Open**



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 09/21/2012 10:46 AM

(Photo by KCSR-Roxie Graham-Marski)

(CHADRON/HALSEY)-Following extensive recent fire activity, considerable portions of the Pine Ridge Ranger District near Chadron remain closed. The closure is a result of a Forest Service order put in place to provide for public safety, health and welfare. The closure order covers all aspects of the Forest Service System Lands, including trails, roads, campgrounds and trailheads. The order can be expected to remain in place until the public can utilize the area safely.

The Region 23 Fire Complex is currently contained, but the potential for hot spots and smoke within fire lines still exists. Pine Ridge District Fire Management Officer Weston Burch says, "As the cooler temperatures begin to produce more favorable conditions across the region, we look forward to transitioning to a 'controlled' status across the burned area. Once this transition occurs, we will be able to consider modifications or lift the order."

Pine Ridge District Ranger John Griesinger said, "As we enter the fall season, the Forest Service is aware of the increase in public lands utilization by hunters and other visitors. We are doing everything in our control to rehabilitate and prepare developed sites within the burned area boundary so those areas can be opened to the public as soon as safety permits."

Even with the closures on the Pine Ridge District, the Nebraska National Forest, Bessey Unit and the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest remain open. Bessey District Ranger Tim Buskirk says "We are still under 'Stage II' Fire Restrictions. For hunters, this basically means that campfires are not allowed anywhere on the Forest, motorized travel is restricted to designated routes, and all motorized equipment must be equipped with a spark arrestor."

The public is encouraged to visit or call the Pine Ridge District at 308-432-0300 or the Bessey District at 308-533-2257 with questions or visit them online at [www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska).