



Flathead National Forest

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News Release

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Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wilderness Areas Closing on the Spotted Bear Ranger District

KALISPELL, MONTANA – August 27, 2015 - Due to increased fire activity and the number of fires on the Spotted Bear Ranger District in the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wilderness Areas, District Ranger Deb Mucklow has initiated closing the Bob Marshall and Great Bear Wilderness Areas on the Spotted Bear Ranger District for public and firefighter safety. The closure will be effective August 28, 2015. “The intention of the closure is to be short term and to get the wilderness areas open as soon as it is safe to do so,” says Ranger Mucklow. “We are contacting all parties currently in the wilderness and making sure they have a plan to get to an open trailhead; and plan to leave in a reasonable timeframe,” stated Mucklow.

With the Bear Creek Fire, Trail Creek Fire and 18 other fires burning across the Spotted Bear District, numerous area and trail closures have been in place since August 12. As new fires have been detected, additional closures have gone into effect. Wilderness areas on Spotted Bear are very remote, have poor communication and are sparsely staffed. It can be difficult to keep track of wilderness users and inform them of new fire starts or increasing fire growth. This closure will allow district personnel to concentrate on fire activity. The closure will be evaluated regularly to determine the feasibility of opening based on fire activity. “Public safety is our main concern,” stated Ranger Mucklow.

There are additional closures on the adjacent ranger districts that are also affecting access to wilderness areas on the Spotted Bear Ranger District. Visitors are reminded that the Schafer Meadows airstrip is included in the Great Bear Wilderness closure.

For further information, contact the Spotted Bear Ranger District at 406 758-5376.

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