



# Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit



For Immediate Release  
Tuesday, June 26, 2007

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## Fire Danger on the Rise

Area residents will be celebrating July 4th in the great outdoors, with many enjoying activities on public lands. Federal, state and county officials urge people to use caution when recreating or working outdoors with any combustible material. Leave fireworks at home and observe fire safety measures. Fire restrictions are starting to go into effect in some counties and on public lands as fire danger levels reach very high to extreme.

Currently, no fire restrictions are in place for most of Northwest Colorado including Rio Blanco, Moffat, Routt, Jackson or Grand Counties. There is one small area of Routt County, south of Toponas, administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Glenwood Springs Field Office, which is under Stage 1 fire restrictions.

Dinosaur National Monument and Browns Park Fish and Wildlife Refuge are expecting to enact fire restrictions next week.

A wet spring kept the fire season at bay until recently and has produced an abundance of grasses. This means plenty of fine fuels are available to burn as they cure and dry out. Fire crews have responded to more than two dozen fires in western Moffat and Rio Blanco counties. The largest has been the Pad Fire at 75 acres on BLM public land, southeast of Rangely. BLM Fuels Specialist Dale Beckerman said, "We're at the point on the west side of our fire unit where an improperly discarded cigarette can spark a wildland fire."

Currently Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties are in very high to extreme fire danger. Routt, Jackson, and Grand Counties are registering very high fire danger levels. The weather forecast calls for hot, dry, windy conditions which will continue to increase fire danger and lower moisture levels in vegetation.

Public land managers invite visitors to public lands, but do so without fireworks. Please take additional precautions to prevent wildfires, such as clearing the brush around campfire rings, making sure campfires are "dead out" before leaving them, smoking only in cleared areas, and avoid parking in tall, dry grass. Always carry a shovel and water with you to extinguish fires.

Remember that possessing or using fireworks on many public lands is illegal. Anyone found responsible for starting a wildland fire may be held liable for the cost of putting it out and/or damages caused by the fire, imprisonment or both.

Before leaving home check on fire related information, contact the managing agency in the area you plan to visit or go to <http://www.dola.state.co.us/oem/> for state wide fire restriction information.

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*Note: Please call your local Sheriff's Department and land management agencies for quotes or more information to tie in with this story.*

