



Arizona State Forestry Division  
Bureau of Indian Affairs: Southwest, Navajo, Western Regions  
Bureau of Land Management: Arizona, New Mexico  
National Park Service, Intermountain Region  
New Mexico State Forestry Division  
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2  
U. S. Forest Service



## Briefing Paper

March 14, 2013

**Topic:** Southwest Interagency Fire Restriction & Closure Program (Program)

**Background:** Interagency coordination of fire restrictions and closures within the [Southwest Area](#) (SWA) has always been a challenge because of differing programs. To address this challenge, the Southwest Coordinating Group (SWCG), which consists of lead fire managers from member agency/tribes within the SWA, tasked its Prevention and Information Subcommittee with developing a standardized interagency fire restriction and closure program for the SWA. A team has been developing the program over the past year.

The Program includes the Southwest Interagency Fire Restriction and Closure Master Operating Plan (MOP) and the National Fire Restriction & Closure Website: [www.firerestrictions.us](http://www.firerestrictions.us). The Program standardizes: fire restriction and closure levels/stages; language; the fire restriction and closure process—initiation, implementation, and recession; and the public notification process. These standards will streamline interagency coordination and unify public notification.

**Current Status:** The MOP has been approved and signed by SWCG members and is the guiding document for fire restrictions and closures in the SWA. Beginning March 15, 2013, all agencies in the SWA will use to the new Program. The National Fire Restriction and Closure Website takes effect March 15.

### Key Points:

- This Program is a step toward reaching the goals of the [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#). The Cohesive Strategy is a collaborative process with active involvement of all levels of government and non-governmental organizations, as well as the public, to seek national, all-lands solutions to wildland fire management issues.
- The Program was developed by an interagency team and has been vetted by the SWCG.
- The former four stages of fire restrictions/closures have been replaced by two levels: Stage I and Stage II, and closures.
- Prohibitions, and exemptions for Stage I, Stage II (elevated), and Closures have been standardized.
- Each agency/tribe will continue to cite their actual regulations/laws and draft their own documents/orders; *therefore, the wording for the prohibition may be slightly different. Exemptions may vary according to specific agency laws and regulations.*
- Each agency/tribe will post signs and notifications according to their procedures and regulations to inform the public of restrictions and closures.
- Agency/tribal public affairs officers or public information officers will continue drafting their own news releases and following their communications plans or standard operating procedures for public notification.
- State Coordinators for Arizona and New Mexico, which includes west Texas, and the Oklahoma Panhandle, will draft statewide, interagency fire restriction and closure news releases.
- The National Fire Restriction & Closure Website displays fire restriction and closure information for 10 states. Each state's webpage can be accessed from the national website: [www.firerestriction.us](http://www.firerestriction.us). Access a state's webpage, via the links below:

- Arizona - <http://firerestrictions.us/az/>
  - New Mexico - <http://firerestrictions.us/nm/>
  - Oklahoma - <http://firerestrictions.us/ok/>
  - Texas - <http://firerestrictions.us/tx/>
- The new website does not replace existing websites or information hotlines. We suggest linking existing websites to the new website.
  - All Program documents are available online on the [Southwest Coordination Center's website](#).

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