

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Closure of National Forest in Ranch Fire burn scar extended until mid 2020

by **Kate B. Maxwell**

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A firefighter with a shovel fights the Ranch Fire near Potter Valley, Calif. on Sunday, July 29, 2018. (Kate B. Maxwell/Bay City News)

MENDOCINO CO., 3/18/19 — Last summer, the Ranch Fire blazed through hundreds of thousands of acres of the Mendocino National Forest, and ever since, the United States Forest Service has deemed portions of the forest unsafe for the public use. Those areas have remained closed, and it is now clear that they will remain so for some time.

On March 14, the Forest Service announced that certain parts of the forest will remain closed until July 1, 2020, as crews undertake what is described as an “immense” amount of work, including repairing trails and damage from flooding, as well as “hazard tree management work,” which was delayed due to the wet winter, according to Forest Supervisor Ann Carlton.

Here’s a link to [**a map of the closed portion of the forest**](#). The Ranch Fire was the largest fire in modern California history.

Here’s the full press release from the U.S.F.S.:

WILLOWS, Calif. — March 14, 2019 – Mendocino National Forest officials are issuing a new Forest Order for the Ranch Fire area and locking gates to enforce the area closure. Forest Order No. 08-19-01 is effective from March 13, 2019 until July 1, 2020.

The amount of work that needs to be done before the fire area is reasonably safe to open is immense. Forest Supervisor Ann Carlson explains, “This wet winter is delaying our efforts to begin the hazard tree management work needed to provide a safe transportation system in the fire area. We appreciate your patience while we continue the recovery and restoration process.”

Post-fire threats for the public, residents of private lands & agency personnel include flooding, debris flows, hazard trees and loss of ingress and egress along roads, trails, recreation areas, and facilities.

While the large Ranch Fire area remains closed, there are over 600,000 acres of the Forest for people to explore when summer arrives. Campgrounds in the northern portion of the Forest generally open around Memorial Day weekend.

The maximum possible penalty for a violation is up to a \$5,000 fine, six months incarceration or both. Forest Order No. 08-19-01 supersedes Order No. 08-18-17 dated November 22, 2018. The order and maps are here: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd613899.pdf March 14, 2019 press release from the U.S. Forest Service