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(S.D.)-Black Hills National Forest Initial Blizzard Assessment Completed



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 10/31/2013 11:25 AM

(CUSTER, S.D.)-Forest officials have completed the initial assessment of roads and recreational sites in the Black Hills National Forest.

Mystic District Ranger Ruth Esperance says, "From what we have seen, there are some areas that have been heavily damaged by the blizzard's wet snow and high wind, specifically downed trees and branches." Esperance says the damage varied across the forest. "Broken tree tops, leaning trees, and other associated hazards from the storm may still pose a safety hazard or risk to employees and visitors."

Esperance says forest officials have received several calls from the public asking if there are places in the forest to drop off debris. She says officials are kindly reminding the public to locate a proper disposal site run by a local municipality and not dispose of yard waste from any private property anywhere on the Forest.

Public Affairs Officer Scott Jacobson says most primary forest roads are generally passable throughout the hills. However, "many trails and secondary roads are either not passable due to deep snow or downed trees, or are very muddy and soft from recent snow melt. In higher elevations, roads may be closed due to snow until spring."

Some recreation sites were also heavily impacted by the storm. Sheridan Lake campground is currently closed due to the amount of downed trees and other hazard trees that pose a risk to visitors. Jacobson says, "Forest visitors should use caution. Please be aware that you may be able to drive down a road only to find that your return out is blocked by a fallen tree or tree top. Be prepared with a saw or shovel as you travel the hills."

Forest visitors should always be aware of their surroundings and be mindful that dead trees, broken tops, dangling branches can fall at any time. Officials also warn that roadways may have washed out or may be blocked by felled trees.

For more information on the Black Hills National Forest, including known open roads and recreation sites and a map of the forest, visit www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills. Click on the Alerts and Notices tab, and then click on October 2013 Storm Assessment Information.

--U.S.Forest Service