U.S. FOREST SERVICE URGES PUBLIC TO CONTACT AGENCY BEFORE FLYING DRONES ON NATIONAL FORESTS AND GRASSLANDS

TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS

 The U.S. Forest Service is urging members of the public who are planning to fly Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), also known as “drones,” on National Forests and Grasslands to contact the local Ranger District office ahead of time to find out whether any agency natural resource management flights are scheduled to prevent accidents.

 U.S. Forest Service airplanes and helicopters fly regularly over National Forest System lands at low altitudes to perform a variety of natural resource management missions. These include aerial surveys to detect forest insect and disease outbreaks, remote sensing to acquire aerial images and data of forests and grasslands, and aerial spraying to control or eradicate major forest pests. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety guidelines instruct members of the public to fly drones at or below 400 feet. That is about the same altitude at which U.S. Forest Service aircraft often fly to perform natural resource management missions, which creates the potential for an accident.

 “It would be a real tragedy if a member of the public was flying a drone for fun on a National Forest or Grassland and either collided with a U.S. Forest Service aircraft or caused a U.S. Forest Service pilot to be distracted and crash, resulting in serious injuries or fatalities,” said (Name), (Title), with the U.S. Forest Service. “We are asking the public to work with us to help prevent that from happening.”

 The U.S. Forest Service urges members of the public to contact the local Ranger District where they want to fly a drone beforehand to see if any agency natural resource management missions are planned during the time they want to fly and if so, to please plan on flying at another time or location. Contact information for all U.S. Forest Service offices in the U.S. is located at [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us) in the “Find a Forest or Grassland” section. Information about U.S. Forest Service natural resource management flights is also available on several websites, including the FAA PilotWeb site <https://pilotweb.nas.faa.gov/PilotWeb/> <http://tfr.faa.gov/tfr_map_ims/html/> and the Defense Internet Notam Service (DINS) <https://www.notams.faa.gov/dinsQueryWeb/>

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