U.S. FOREST SERVICE URGES PUBLIC TO CONTACT LAND MANAGERS/OWNERS BEFORE FLYING DRONES 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,” to contact the manager or owner of the land they play to fly over 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 private, state, and 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. Under Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety guidelines, members of the public are supposed 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 and either collided with a (U.S. Forest Service or partnering organization, i.e. State Department of Forestry, Agriculture, or Natural Resources; National Aeronautics and Space Administration; U.S. Department of the Interior [DOI or DOI bureau, such as the National Park Service]; Federal Emergency Management Administration; Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; University, etc.) aircraft or caused a pilot to be distracted and crash, resulting in serious injuries or fatalities,” said (Name), (Title), with the (organization name). “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 owner or manager of the land where they want to fly a drone beforehand to see if any 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 partner organization resource operations may be obtained by contacting Forest Health Protection unit Aviation Officers, a list is available at <https://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/aviation/regionalaviation.shtml> 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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