

Yuba Fire reveals a systemic problem in the river canyon: campfires

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NEVADA CITY, Calif. August 2, 2016 – The Yuba Fire, currently held in check by firefighters, has revealed a worrisome problem in the Yuba river canyon. Numerous extinguished campfires and fire rings were found by crews hiking in to the fire.

The checkerboard ownership in the canyon has long been used by irresponsible campers as an excuse to have their campfires in the canyon. State Parks and BLM own the majority of the land between Purdon and Edwards Crossing on the South Yuba Trail. On BLM land, you may camp, with a valid camp permit, for up to fourteen days. No camping is allowed on State Parks land, it is day use only.

No camp fires allowed anywhere

Now in the fifth year of a drought, fire danger is extremely high. Therefore, even BLM has issued fire restrictions: ***Open fires are not allowed outside of posted, developed campgrounds and recreation sites, even with a campfire permit. Portable stoves and lanterns using gas, pressurized liquid fuel or jellied petroleum may be used outside of developed campgrounds and recreation areas. Campfire permits are required. Permits are available at BLM, Forest Service and Cal Fire offices.***

A CAL FIRE prevention officer accessing the fire educated some campers that had a fire roaring around 11 am, clearly oblivious to the posted signs.



YubaNet file photo from the 2013 Tyler Fire.

Daily foot patrols are urgently needed

The absence of regular patrols in the canyon has led to several fires over the years. While all agencies are short-staffed, a rotation of law enforcement officers could be set up and jointly patrol public lands.

With the bulk of the fire season still ahead of us, the risk a fire in the canyon poses is too great to be left unaddressed. The mutual aid system has proven its efficiency when it comes to fighting fires, could a similar system prevent a catastrophic fire?

Cell phone use

Locals regularly report getting into arguments with campers. Do not confront campers, report them and the exact location of their fire. While cell phones rarely work in river canyons, you can still use the GPS function to get a precise location. Open the map app of your choice and drop a pin at the location. An exact location, be that for a fire or a medical emergency, will shorten response time for firefighters and medics. So will parking in permissible spots, instead of blocking the roadway.

Camping rules

Edwards Crossing – NO overnight camping. Overnight parking OK. The area between a ¼ mile downstream and a ½ mile upstream from Edwards Crossing is a high-density recreation area – DAY USE ONLY.

Purdon Crossing – NO overnight camping. Overnight parking OK in two designated parking spaces for no more than 7 days. Approximately 1 mile from Purdon Crossing to China Dam is a high-density recreation area – DAY USE ONLY.