



SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

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Bear Dance Fire Burn Area Closed Until Further Notice

Southern Ute Indian Reservation – The Southern Ute Tribal Council has permanently closed the Bear Dance Fire Burn Area until further notice. The Bear Dance Fire ignited on June 3 on tribal trust land. The riparian area burned 89 acres north of the Bear Dance grounds and along the Pine River.

BIA Fire Management welcomed the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) team to oversee the BAER planning and implementation. The program brought technical experts to the Southern Ute Indian Reservation to meet with tribal professionals to address safety hazards and begin restoration. While conducting a walk through with Tribal Council, leadership noticed what was thought to be an area where hazardous materials may have been disposed of in years past.

The area housed historic office buildings for the BIA. Like many older buildings, the materials used at the time of construction often contained hazardous materials. The Bear Dance Fire exposed the site and the hazardous materials which has created a concern for public health. Out of an abundance of caution, Tribal Council has closed the Bear Dance Fire burn area until further notice.

The BAER program will be placed on a temporary hold until the area can be investigated by professionals. At the conclusion of the investigation, , alternatives will be evaluated and a plan will be developed to protect public health and the environment.. Additional information will be shared at that time.

If you have any questions, please contact Tribal Council at (970) 563.0199 or the Southern Ute Environmental Programs Division at (970) 563.2206.

“The health and safety of the tribal membership and our tribal community is one of the highest priorities for Tribal Council. We were looking forward to seeing the remediation work by the BAER team and tribal staff, however the safety of all involved takes greater precedence. It is very important that the tribal community take heed to this health advisory and refrain from entering the Bear Dance Fire burn area,” stated Chairman Melvin J. Baker.

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