

Warm Temps Boost Risk of Floods

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The warmer weather has brought on minor flooding, forest road closures and the Silver Valley's first thunder and lightning storm of the season. Booming sounds and bright flashes made an appearance late Sunday night and early Monday morning, but Avista Utilities reported no power outages. More storms are expected today and Wednesday, and high temperatures should be in the mid- to high-60s.

As of 2:30 p.m. Monday, the Coeur d'Alene River at Cataldo was a 42.96 feet, barely short of the 43-foot flood stage. The National Weather Service anticipates levels to rise through Wednesday afternoon, dip about a foot and then increase to around 46 feet on Friday afternoon.

Rain and increased snow melt in the past several weeks are creating hazardous conditions on forest roads throughout the Panhandle, reported the U.S. Forest Service on Monday.

As the weather warms, officials said, USFS employees and forest visitors are able to access more of the backcountry where they are discovering deep mud and unstable road beds due to saturated soils.

Beauty-Cedar Road and West Fork Eagle Creek Road, in the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, are both closed due to extensive road damage and an extremely soft roadbed. The roads will remain closed until they are repaired. A timeline for road repairs has not yet been identified and is dependent on road repair funding availability.

As more people are able to venture further into the forest this season, it is likely that additional road damage will be discovered, and further emergency closures may be needed to provide for public safety and prevent additional damage.

Forest visitors are urged to use caution, and if visitors find themselves on a soft roadbed they should turn around before they become stuck or cause damage to the road which could result in additional road closures. Before venturing into the forest early this season, forest visitors are encouraged to contact their local Forest Service office for the latest information on forest road conditions.