

Forest Service Ordered To Halt Firewood Sales

AP

YAKIMA - A federal judge has ordered the U.S. Forest Service to stop selling firewood from the Naches Ranger District near Yakima.

Tuesday's temporary order by U.S. District Judge Alan McDonald stemmed from a challenge by Clean Air Yakima, a citizens group concerned about air quality, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund said in a news release.

"Firewood burning is the major threat to human health in Yakima during the winter months," said Susan West, a respiratory therapist and member of Clean Air Yakima. "Judge McDonald's order is a great relief as the Forest Service is the largest supplier of firewood in the area."

A final order could be issued as soon as mid-July, after attorneys on both sides present briefs on the question of whether the Forest Service is required to prepare an environmental impact statement on its firewood-sales program, said Corrie Yackulic, the attorney representing Clean Air Yakima.

The court action seeks to require such a study to determine the environmental effects of selling firewood, for which the Forest Service charges only \$5 per cord in the Wenatchee National Forest, she said.

"This case is directed just at the Naches district," Yackulic said.

"If we prevail, it could have a bearing on the Forest Service's firewood sales program elsewhere."