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U.S. Department of the
Interior

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CHIRICAHUA NATIONAL MONUMENT – NEWS RELEASE

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Scenic Drive and Campground Closed Due to Flooding

The upper portion of Bonita Canyon Drive and the Bonita Canyon Campground in Chiricahua National Monument (NM) are closed after flooding from weekend storms. Nearly three inches of rain fell in parts of the monument on Friday, August 17, with additional storms dropping another seven tenths of an inch of rain on Sunday, August 19.

The monument was evacuated and closed around 5:00 pm on Friday evening. The entire Bonita Canyon Drive was closed overnight and the lower portion was reopened on Saturday morning after crews were able to assess the damages and clean up debris.

Significant mud and debris flow and damage to the road shoulders has left the upper portion of the Bonita Canyon Drive (past the visitor center) unsafe for travelers. The Bonita Canyon Campground also sustained moderate damage from the flooding. Cleanup and repairs to the roadway and campground are estimated to be completed by Labor Day weekend.

Chiricahua NM is open to visitors. The lower portion of Bonita Canyon Drive is open and features access to historic Faraway Ranch, a picnic area, a visitor center and bookstore, and several trailheads. Trails in the monument are passable but users may encounter debris piles and loose soils. Hikers are reminded that areas that have experienced large fires, such as the Horseshoe II fire that burned over 200,000 acres in and around Chiricahua NM in 2011, have an increased risk of flash flooding. Visitors are encouraged to check weather forecasts before heading out and pay attention to their surroundings. Soils in a burned landscape can create slippery conditions, and mud and rockslides can be triggered by the heavy rainfall events that are typical during monsoon season.

Although the monument plans to be fully open by Labor Day weekend, it is best to contact the Chiricahua NM visitor center at 520-824-3560 x0 for the most-up-to-date information or visit www.nps.gov/chir.

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