

Potential for fireworks ban increases due to drought

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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Even as people stay inside during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the imminent summer season means people are going to want to buy fireworks. But Gallup Deputy Fire Chief Richard Austin says the weather conditions around McKinley County may put a damper on those plans.

“Based on the most recent U.S. drought monitor data, approximately 80-90 percent of McKinley County is either under moderate drought conditions or severe drought conditions with approximately 30 percent of McKinley County currently in severe drought conditions,” he said.

As in past years, the ban would not completely outlaw sales of fireworks, however.

“It does not ban all fireworks, only those kinds the state lets us ban when we find the county is in severe drought,” County Attorney Doug Decker said.

Decker also said this type of ban is only good for 30 days, which would cover the typical Independence Day buying window of June 20 to July 6. He added the ban could be extended as needed depending on the recent weather reports.

The board has to aim to make their move about 20 days before the holiday occurs, Decker continued. This will allow vendors time to prepare their inventory and ensure they do not buy a

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large amount of fireworks that end up being banned.

Dist. 3 Commissioner Bill Lee said not only does the county have to look at the local drought conditions, but the orders of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on whether non-essential businesses can operate.

As of May 19, while parts of New Mexico have begun reopening, McKinley County is part of the northwestern region of the state that is not allowed to open due to the increase in and number of positive COVID-19 cases.

“This part of the [decision] is completely out of our hands,” Lee said.

The board plans to take action on a potential ban at their June 2 meeting. They will be taking public comments during that meeting.

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