

County mulls temporary, tailored fireworks ban

Written by By Kevin Opsahl Sun Correspondent
Friday, 26 March 2021 05:42



McKinley County might see its first-ever ban on certain fireworks this Cinco De Mayo, depending on what the board of commissioners decides next month.

The panel of three members — Billy Moore, Genevieve Jackson and Robert Baca — heard from county fire chief Brian Archuleta, who recommended the board approve a resolution declaring the county is in a drought and ban the use of fireworks on Cinco De Mayo and Independence Day.

“I wanted to start this early and bring this to your attention and have a good discussion,” Archuleta said.

In a short presentation, he showed how New Mexico has experienced exceptional, extreme, and severe drought conditions over the last three weeks. Much of McKinley County is in the top two categories of “exceptional” and “extreme,” with a tiny slice in the southeast corner in the lesser category of “severe.”

District 1 Commissioner and Chairman Billy Moore said the board will “continue to monitor this” and bring the issue back to the next meeting April 6. Until that time, residents are welcome to submit their comments on whether or not to ban certain fireworks, he said.

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County Attorney Doug Decker told commissioners if the board were to approve the proclamation the first week of April, it would be effective for 30 days, running through the traditional sale period of fireworks during Cinco De Mayo.

In an interview with the *Gallup Sun*, Decker said a complete, across-the-board ban of all fireworks is not possible, but it would apply to those that go high and “make a big, loud bang.”

According to the proclamation in draft form, McKinley County would not prohibit use or sale of ground audible devices including: missile-type rockets, chasers and firecrackers.

It would limit the use of various types of fireworks, including cylindrical fountains, illuminating torches and toy smoking devices.

Decker knows some people might be disappointed if the commissioners approve any type of fireworks ban, but he believes they will act with good reason.

“Every county commission we’ve ever brought this up before has very well considered the evidence placed before them and sometimes they put the ban in and sometimes they haven’t,” he said, noting last year a ban was not approved despite recommendations to do so, because Gallup was not able to concurrently enforce its own ban.

Archuleta plans to keep commissioners apprised of drought conditions in the coming months, so they can have the best information come Independence Day, Decker said.

Commissioner Robert Baca said he found Archuleta’s presentation interesting, but he is not ready to make a decision on whether fireworks should be banned on May 5 and July 4.

“We have some information, but we don’t have a whole lot so far, so for me to say, ‘yeah, let’s ban that right now,’ I don’t have an answer — because it may change; we may have good moisture,” Baca said.

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