



File Code: 1950
Date: August 2, 2019

Dear Interested Party,

I have signed the final Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project on the Darby/Sula Ranger District of the Bitterroot National Forest.

I have selected the Proposed Action from the Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Environmental Assessment (EA) to manage the transportation system and forest in the project area. After reviewing the analysis, public comments, and the project record, I have decided that the Proposed Action best addresses the purpose and need for the project and provides an appropriate balance for managing competing values and interests in the long-term.

The proposed action will:

- Design and implement a suitable transportation system for long-term land management,
- Improve forest health while reducing potential fire severity, and
- Provide timber products and related jobs.

The Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Notice are available on the internet at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49700>. You can also request a paper copy or CD from the Darby Ranger District or Supervisor's Office in Hamilton.

The Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project was subject to the Pre-decisional Administrative Review process, 36CFR 218 subparts A and B. We received ten objections. The Objection Reviewing Officer reviewed the project in the context of the objection points and suggested remedies. He found the project complied with all applicable laws and the Forest Plan. He allowed the decision to be signed after his instructions to the Forest were fulfilled and approved. The instructions were fulfilled and I signed the Decision Notice July 31, 2019.

Thank you for your participation in this analysis process. I appreciate your interest and participation. If you have questions about the Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project analysis and decision, please contact me at (406) 363-7121 or stop by the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Office at 1801 N. 1st St., Hamilton, Montana. Eric Winthers, the Darby/Sula District Ranger, is also available to answer your questions at (406) 871-4244.

Sincerely,

MATTHEW ANDERSON
Forest Supervisor



From: McKay, Tod G -FS <tod.mckay@usda.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 6, 2019 10:35 AM
Subject: News Release: Darby LL Project Phase 2 - Moving Forward
Attachments: Darby LL2 - FINAL DN-FONSI.docx

Darby LL Project Phase 2 – Moving Forward

Hamilton, Montana (August 6, 2019) – Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Matt Anderson has signed the final Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Darby Lumber Lands Project - Phase 2. The decision authorizes the forest to move forward on the vegetation management, fuels reduction, and transportation system project encompassing approximately 27,453 acres in the South Fork Sleeping Child and Rye Creek drainages in the Sapphire Mountains east of Darby.

Phase 1 of the project was completed in 2016 and focused on improving watershed and stream health including reducing chronic sediment from an extensive road system built decades ago for timber management. It also created a sustainable motorized access system and loop-based motorized routes, including 44 miles of connector trails for motorcycle and ATV travel.

Phase 2 is a continuation of the original project and also incorporates vegetation management activities. The proposed action will:

- Improve watershed conditions through management of a suitable transportation system
- Improve forest health and reduce potential fire severity
- Provide timber products and related jobs

The project also implements changes to access on existing roads and trails, storing and decommissioning unneeded roads and trails, building five new motorized connector trails and loop routes for ATV travel, and construction of several temporary roads.

Proposed treatments include commercial timber harvests, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning to improve forest health.

The project could begin as early as this fall and would provide 5.7 million board feet (1,200 truckloads) of timber to Montana sawmills.

The Darby Lumber Lands - Phase 2 Project was subject to public objection under Code of Federal Regulations §218. The Objection Reviewing Officer who reviewed the project found that it complied with all applicable laws and the Forest Plan.

The DN/FONSI are available online at www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49700 and at the Darby Ranger District and Forest Supervisor's Office in Hamilton.

For additional information contact Eric Winthers, District Ranger, Darby/Sula Ranger District at (406) 821-3913.

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Tod McKay
Public Affairs Officer

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