



Bitterroot National Forest

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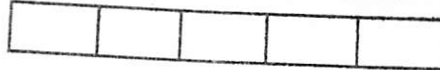
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Ravalli County Commissioners



News Release

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Forest is asking the public to help develop project along the Bitterroot Front

Hamilton, Montana (September 30, 2019) – The Bitterroot National Forest is inviting the public to attend a series of meetings, or workshops, this fall to help in the design of an on-the-ground project to address management concerns on National Forest System lands in the Bitterroot Mountains.

Generally, the “Bitterroot Front Project” will aim to increase landscape resiliency, provide for public and firefighter safety, reduce fire risk to communities, improve wildlife habitat, and contribute to community viability with forest products and jobs, as well as recreation opportunities.

More specifically, the project area encompasses approximately 150,000 acres of the Forest from the southern end of the Darby Ranger District near Trapper Creek north to the Forest boundary at the northern end of the Stevensville Ranger District near McClain Creek. Approximately 50,000 acres of the project area falls within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Management activities will also help address the goals and objectives in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Joint Chief’s Landscape Restoration Partnership, and the 1987 Bitterroot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

For this project, a “Shared Stewardship Approach” will be used to encourage vegetation treatments across boundaries to achieve a landscape scale outcome. The objective is to treat as much of the WUI as possible while providing opportunities for private land owners to learn about and potentially participate in fuel reduction efforts including prescribed fire, non-commercial thinning, and commercial timber harvest. Partners include Montana DNRC, Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), and Natural Resources and Conservation Services (NRCS).

In a study released last year on new housing being built in wildfire-prone areas, more than 90% of all new homes in Ravalli County in the last two decades were built in “high wildfire hazard areas”, more than all other western Montana counties combined. Private land owners along the Forest boundary in the WUI will be invited to participate through RC&D and Good Neighbor Authority.

“This landscape just screams risk,” said Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Matt Anderson. “This project is all about doing the right thing on the landscape at a scale that matters, protecting homes, property, and lives, and restoring the ecosystem for a host of resources. This is expensive, tough ground to treat and I’m asking our partners, neighbors, and community members to work together on a long term fire risk and restoration strategy.”

How to participate in these workshops:

The first in a series of public meetings on the Bitterroot Front Project will be held on **Thursday, October 10th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Darby Community Clubhouse -- located at 106 N. Main Street in Darby.** Participants will hear a presentation from Byron Bonney with RC&D on fire impacts along the Bitterroot Front and effects on homeowners living in the WUI. After the presentation, participants are encouraged to stay and visit with Forest Service personnel who will lead small group discussions focused on forest health and vegetation management, fire risk and fuels mitigation, as well as recreation and public access and road systems on USFS lands within the project area.

Additionally, citizens are encouraged to attend that have an interest in fuels mitigation on their private property as well as on public lands. NRCS, DNRC and RC&D personnel will also be available to discuss various programs to assist private landowners with fuels mitigation projects.

See below for additional Bitterroot Front Project public meeting dates and locations. For more information contact Eric Winthers, Darby/Sula District Ranger at 406-821-4244.

Public Meeting Schedule	Bitterroot Front Project
<i>Date & Time / Areas</i>	<i>Location</i>
October 10 th / 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. <i>(Darby & Sula)</i>	Darby Community Clubhouse – 106 N. Main Street, Darby
October 22 nd / 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. <i>(Victor & Stevensville)</i>	Stevensville Westside Fire Station – 156 Kinsman Drive, Stevensville
October 29 th / 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. <i>(Corvallis & Pinesdale)</i>	Corvallis Fire Station – 317 Woodside Cutoff Road, Corvallis
November 5 th / 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. <i>(Florence & Lolo)</i>	Florence Carlton School, old gym – 5602 Old U.S. 93, Florence
November 12 th / 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. <i>(Hamilton)</i>	Bitterroot River Inn – Tammany Room, 139 Bitterroot Plaza Drive, Hamilton

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