



Bitterroot National Forest

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News Release

Media Contact: (406) 363-7122
Tod McKay

Forest Service signs final Decision for Gold Butterfly Project

Hamilton, Montana (November 18, 2019) – Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Matt Anderson has signed the final Record of Decision (ROD) for the Gold Butterfly Project on the Stevensville Ranger District. The decision authorizes the forest to move forward on the vegetation management and fuels reduction project in the Sapphire Mountains east of Corvallis. The project is located between St. Clair Creek to the south and Burnt Fork Creek to the north.

Objectives of the project include:

- Improve forest resilience to natural disturbances (fire, insects, and diseases).
- Reduce chronic sediment sources in Willow Creek watershed to improve water quality and bull trout habitat.
- Restore or improve key habitats including meadows, aspen, and whitebark pine.
- Manage timber to provide forest products, jobs, income to local communities.

Approximately 9,500 acres of the project area have been designated an insect and disease treatment area due to dense pockets of dead and dying trees. The area is impacted by mountain pine beetle, Douglas-fir bark beetle, dwarf mistletoe and western spruce budworm damage.

The Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan also identified the area as a 'high priority' for fuels reduction in the Wildland Urban Interface.

Proposed treatments include commercial timber harvest, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning on approximately 7,376 acres to improve forest health. The selected alternative was modified to retain old growth status in all treatment units.

All temporary roads needed to complete vegetation management activities will be revegetated after use. The Forest Service will also be responsible for road maintenance, including dust suppression, along the full gravel section of Willow Creek Road during project implementation. Work on the project could begin as early as this spring.

The Gold Butterfly 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.

To learn more about the project, visit the Bitterroot National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=51486 or call the Stevensville Ranger District at (406) 777-5461.

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