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Ravalli County Commissioners

# News Release



Bitterroot National Forest

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Hamilton, MT 59840

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## Forest Seeks Comments on West Fork Project

Hamilton, Montana (March 30, 2018) – The Bitterroot National Forest is inviting the public to review and make comments on the West Fork Highway Dispersed Sites Rehab Project. The project proposes to obliterate and revegetate user-created roads and place large boulders to delineate where vehicles can drive and park on two parcels of National Forest lands on the river side of the West Fork Highway. The two parcels are located at mileposts 11 and 12.

At milepost 11, an excavator/backhoe and dump truck would obliterate 300 feet of user-created road and place boulders to define a parking area where users could park and walk into the site to fish along the river. The areas would be seeded with grass, fertilized, and straw mulch may be applied in certain areas.

At milepost 12, an excavator/backhoe and dump truck would remove the approach coming off of the highway and obliterate a spider web network of 1,000 feet of user-created roads in the interior of the site. The areas would be seeded with grass, fertilized, and straw mulch may be applied in certain areas.

Hand crews would also be used to pile and burn some of the firewood slash that has accumulated on the forest floor. The small lodgepole pine snags that are still standing would be felled, piled, and burned. Sub-merchantable green trees that have been damaged by firewood felling would be thinned, piled, and burned. The total area of slash clean-up and manual thinning is approximately 7.5 acres.

Obliteration of the user-created roads and placement of boulders is scheduled to begin this spring. Hand crew slash clean-up will take place later this summer or fall. It is likely to take more than one field season to complete the work.

The purpose of the project is to stop off-road vehicle use and prevent associated resource damage on Bitterroot National Forest lands that border the West Fork Bitterroot River. The resource damage that is occurring includes cutting firewood too close to the river, dumping trash and animal carcasses, and trespassing onto neighboring private lands with motorized vehicles. Both sites would still be available for the public to use on a walk-in basis.

Submit comments to the Responsible Official: David Fox, Acting District Ranger, by one of the following methods; mail: 6735 West Fork Road, Darby, Montana 59829. Fax: (406) 821-1211, or email [comments-northern-bitterroot-west-fork@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-bitterroot-west-fork@fs.fed.us). Comments should include: 1) name, address, phone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of project on which the comments are being submitted; and 3) substantive comments including specific facts and supporting information for the District Ranger to consider.

Public comments are due by April 16, 2018. For more information contact Michael Jakober at the West Fork Ranger District at (406) 821-3269.

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