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Subject: Bitterroot NF Press Release - Fire Danger moves to moderate and tips for visitors for 4th of July

Fire Danger moves to moderate and tips for visitors for 4th of July

Hamilton, Montana (June 26, 2018) – On June 27th, fire danger moves to “moderate” on the Bitterroot National Forest. Please use caution, as fires can start from most accidental causes. Fires in grass will burn briskly and spread rapidly on windy days. The average fire is of moderate intensity, although heavy piles may burn hot.

This year, firefighters on the Bitterroot National Forest have extinguished 2 lightning caused fires, both kept under 1/10 of an acre.

With the 4th of July right around the corner, the Bitterroot National Forest is a great place to get away from the noise of fireworks and enjoy your holiday. A few considerations will help ensure everyone’s safety and enjoyment:

- **Fireworks are not permitted** on National Forests. Please leave them at home. Violations are punishable by a fine of \$500 or more. Anyone who starts a wildfire can be held liable for suppression costs which can be substantial.
- **All campgrounds on the Forest are open and ready for visitors.** Campgrounds fill up quickly. For a complete list of campgrounds and to determine if your favorite campground is one in which you can reserve a site, visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot and click on the *Recreation/Cabins and Camping* sections.
- **Campgrounds must be occupied the first night.** Most campgrounds are first come, first served. Sites must be occupied the first night; no setting out chairs or coolers days before actually occupying the campsite.
- **Never leave a campfire unattended** and make sure your coals are cool to the touch before you leave. Smoldering campfires left unattended are still potentially dangerous. Have a shovel and bucket on hand to help put the fire out when not attended.
- **Be prepared for changing weather conditions** including the potential for afternoon thunderstorms.
- **Be cautious around flowing waters** and especially at creek crossings.
- **Expect heavier traffic than normal on forest roads and trails** over the holiday. Drive defensively and notify the Forest Service of any downed trees or road damage so repairs can be made.
- **Pack it In–Pack it Out** is the best practice for all of your garbage.

The gate at Lost Horse Road #429 on the Darby/Sula Ranger District is open but please be advised that the road is rough (ruts & wash boarded) and is not recommended for trailers or low clearance vehicles. Schumaker Campground and Bear Creek Pass are still inaccessible due to large snow drifts across the road.

The Magruder Road Corridor between Darby, MT and Elk City, ID is closed at Observation Point due to snow. Nez Perce Pass is open to Paradise Campground. Contact the West Fork Ranger District for road updates. Magruder Road is suitable for high-clearance vehicles only. Travelers are advised to carry a chainsaw in case of a fallen tree on the road and should be aware that there is no cell phone coverage or services for 120 miles.

A reminder for those heading to Lake Como, you will need a recreation pass for parking. Cost of the passes are \$5/vehicle or \$30 for a season pass and are available at all Forest Service offices, area retailers including Mr. T's and People's Market in Darby and Angler's Roost, Lone Pine, Town Pump South, Bob Ward's, and Riverside in Hamilton, and on-site at the recreation area. Day use fees and camping fees are charged at Lake Como from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend. The fees are used for the operations and maintenance of the recreation area. Drinking water is available at Lake Como.

Local hiking and camping books, maps, animal and plant guides and Forest souvenirs are available at the *Discover the Bitterroot* store in the lobby of the Forest Supervisor's office at 1801 N. First Street in Hamilton.

Have a safe and happy 4th of July holiday!

Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF and www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF. Please contact the appropriate District Offices for updates and more information.

Bitterroot National Forest

West Fork Ranger District, (406) 821-3269

Darby/Sula Ranger District, (406) 821-3913

Stevensville Ranger District, (406) 777-5461

Supervisor's Office, (406) 363-7100

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