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JUL 10 2018



Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. First
Hamilton, MT 59840

Web: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot>

Ravalli County Commissioners

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News Release

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Reaction to Forest Travel Plan Ruling and Next Steps

Hamilton, Montana (July 10, 2018) – Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) Supervisor Julie King responded today to Judge Dana Christensen’s recent ruling on a lawsuit challenging the forest travel plan, adopted in 2016. “While the decision is still under review, I am very pleased overall with the ruling which upholds the majority of our current Travel Management Plan. This plan included over 13,000 public comments and years of planning and input from a wide variety of forest users and groups. I’m grateful that all of our hard work, analysis, and collaboration was upheld.”

“In the ruling, Judge Christensen also said that we did not provide an adequate objection response period regarding the closure of trails in Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) to bicycles. We are currently working on providing this objection opportunity, and will have more information to share soon regarding this process,” said King.

The two WSAs on the forest are located on the West Fork and Darby/Sula Ranger Districts and total approximately 102,000 acres. They were created by Congress in the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977.

As directed by the court, the only issue to be considered during the upcoming objection response period is the closure of trails in WSAs to bicycles. Pending the outcome of the objection process, trails in WSAs are open to mountain bikes. All other challenges by the plaintiffs against the plan were rejected. Therefore, all other aspects of the current BNF Travel Plan remain in place at this time.

The plan designates 2,246 miles of forest roads and trails open to motorized use. It also permits motorized over-snow use (snowmobiles) on 543,840 acres, approximately one-third of the forest. These areas are designated on a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) and Over-Snow Vehicle Use Map (OSVUM) available free of charge at all Bitterroot National Forest offices and online. The maps identify which areas are open to motorized use, the types of vehicles allowed and any seasonal restrictions that apply.

For more information, including the Travel Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) visit www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot.

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[The body of the document contains several paragraphs of text that are extremely faint and difficult to read. The text appears to be a formal communication, possibly a letter or a report, addressed to the Ravalli County Commissioners. It likely discusses a matter of public interest or a specific request for action. Due to the low contrast and quality of the scan, the specific content of the text cannot be accurately transcribed.]