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Subject: News Release: Forest Announces Objection Period For Bikes In WSAs
Attachments: Objection Period - Bikes in WSAs.docx

Forest Announces Objection Period for Bikes in WSAs

Hamilton, Montana (August 22, 2018) – The Bitterroot National Forest is initiating a 45-day objection period to allow individuals or organizations to submit objections to certain designations in the Bitterroot Travel Plan concerning mountain biking in Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The Sapphire and Blue Joint WSAs are located on the Darby/Sula and West Fork Ranger Districts and total approximately 102,000 acres. They were created by Congress in the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977.

Both areas were closed to mountain bikes in 2016, when the Bitterroot National Forest Travel Management Plan was enacted.

The objection period is in response to the June 29, 2018 ruling by Federal Judge Dana Christensen on a lawsuit challenging the travel plan. The court instructed the Forest Service to conduct an objection response period regarding closures of trails in WSAs to bicycles.

As directed by the court, the only issue to be considered during the objection response period is the closure of the Sapphire and Blue Joint WSAs to mountain biking. No other aspects of the Travel Plan will be subject to the objection process.

Only individuals or entities who submitted timely and specific written comments during Travel Plan scoping or on the DEIS may file an objection.

The Travel Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) are available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=21183>. Please refer to pages 24-25 of the Record of Decision (ROD) for the decision maker's rationale for closing WSAs to mountain bikes. There is also a detailed description of trails closed to bicycles in WSAs and their mileage online.

The deadline to submit objections is October 9, 2018.

Objections mailed or hand delivered must be submitted to the reviewing officer by one of the following methods; mail: Objection Reviewing Officer, USDA Forest Service, 26 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, MT 59804. Fax: (406) 329-3411, or email: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Hand delivered objections must be delivered between 8am-4:30pm weekdays, excluding holidays.

Objections should include: 1) Objectors name, address, phone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of project on which the objections are being submitted along with the name of the national forest; 3) A description of those aspects of the proposed project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposed project; if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or

decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; and 4) objectors signature.

Please put "Bitterroot Travel Plan Objection" in the subject line for emailed objections. An automated response will confirm that your electronic objection has been received. All objections are open to public inspection and will be posted to the Forest Service website.

For more information or questions, please contact Amy Fox, Environmental Coordinator, 1801 N. First Street, Hamilton, MT 59840 or (406) 363-7100.

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