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Forest Lowers Fire Danger

Hamilton, Montana (September 27, 2018) – Fall has arrived and with the onset of cool, damp weather around the corner, the Bitterroot National Forest will lower its fire danger beginning Sunday, September 30th to “Moderate”, down from “High”.

When fire danger is “moderate”, fires can start from most accidental causes, but the number of fires is usually low. If a fire starts in open, dry grassland, it will burn and spread quickly on windy days. Most wood fires spread slowly to moderately and are often easy to control.

Ravalli County will also allow open burning beginning this Sunday, on a day-to-day basis as determined by fire danger and air quality. Activated burn permits are required for all open burning in the county. To learn whether burning is allowed, residents should log in to the burn permit system using the link on the Ravalli County Sheriff’s app for mobile devices or visit www.burnpermit.mt.gov. Burn permits can also be activated by calling 1-866-212-6318. The burn permit system will not allow permits to be activated if burning is not allowed on that particular day, due to low air quality or fire danger.

Reminder, the Bitterroot National Forest is conducting fall prescribed burning operations for the next several weeks. Burns consists of pile burning to reduce residual slash from timber harvest operations and prescribed burns to reduce forest fuels in the Wildland Urban Interface, improve wildlife habitat, and maintain forest health. Controlled burns are scheduled on the Stevensville, Darby/Sula, and West Fork Ranger Districts.

Prescribed fire produces smoke, but the smoke is typically visible for a short duration, 1-2 days, and managed to minimize impacts to communities. These burns also reduce the potential of future, larger, high-intensity wildfires. Burning will only occur if operational safety, fuel moisture, weather conditions, and air quality parameters can be attained. Fall burning normally takes place on the Forest between September and November, and burning is highly weather dependent.

For the latest burn announcements, maps, and photos of project areas visit us at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot or www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF or call your local Ranger District.

It's starting to get cold in the evenings and mornings out in the woods, and a campfire can help take the edge off the chill. Stay warm, but please make sure your fire is dead out. We've had several human-caused wildfires, the result of campfires left unattended or not drowned until cold, over the last few weeks. Please don't forget your responsibility to maintain and extinguish all campfires. One spark is all it takes to start a wildfire. Never leave a campfire unattended.

Fuels remain dry, and even dewy grasses and wood can dry out and ignite fairly quickly with wind or sun. Please use small diameter wood that burns completely for campfires, and when leaving it down your

fire, stir, feel for heat, and drown again until there is no heat left. Remember, if it's too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave!

Firefighters have responded to and extinguished 42 wildfires this summer on the Bitterroot National Forest. Due to the quick response of crews, most fires were kept small -- under 1 acre in size.

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