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Annual Climbing Restrictions and Closures in Mill Creek Canyon

Hamilton, Montana (February 14, 2019) – With spring just around the corner, the Stevensville Ranger District would like to remind rock climbers of the continued moratorium on bolting in Mill Creek Canyon. The “No Bolting” moratorium prohibits the installation of any new bolts and also prohibits expanding any of the current bolted routes in Mill Creek, north of Hamilton. Replacement of existing bolts for safety reasons is acceptable.

The Forest Service has also closed several climbing routes, beginning February 1st to prevent disturbance to known raptor nesting sites. On the north side of Mill Creek, the spring raptor closure will be the same as last year and includes the “Pie for Strength” climbing area. Closure maps have been posted at area trailheads and on the Bitterroot National Forest website.

Wildlife Biologists plan to visit the area later this spring to determine the presence or absence of birds using the nests. If the nests are not active, the restrictions will be lifted. Please check the forest website to determine if the closure is still in effect. Forest Service personnel are also planning additional climbing area visits later this spring to assess current conditions and how to move forward in the future.

Mill Creek Canyon is a popular destination for hikers, horseback riders, and in the last several years has become very popular with rock climbers. The increased use has resulted in numerous impacts including parking and trash issues, trail erosion, and the visual impact of climbing gear left on cliffs.

Forest officials want to remind climbers of their responsibility to regulate use and self-police their activities by following the “Leave No Trace” and “Pack it In, Pack it Out” principles. Copies of the “Leave No Trace Climbing” brochure are available at all Bitterroot National Forest offices and at trailhead bulletin boards. To learn more about these simple climbing tips and recommendations visit www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot. Click on Recreation and Climbing. The area will be monitored for compliance.

Climbers should also be aware that vandalism of bolts has been reported recently in the climbing area and they should pay close attention and inspect all bolt protection prior to use. For more information contact the Stevensville Ranger District at (406) 777-5461.

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