

Glenda Wiles

From: McKay, Tod G -FS <tgmkay@fs.fed.us>
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Subject: News Release: Darby LL Project Phase 2 - Analysis and Draft Decision Released
Attachments: Darby LL2 - DN-FONSI.docx

Darby LL Project Phase 2 - Analysis and Draft Decision Released

Hamilton, Montana (March 1, 2019) – The Bitterroot National Forest has released the Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) for the Darby Lumber Lands Project - Phase 2. The documents are available for public review and objection. The vegetation management, fuels reduction, and transportation system project encompasses approximately 27,453 acres in the South Fork Sleeping Child and Rye Creek drainages in the Sapphire Mountains east of Darby.

Phase 1 of the project was completed in 2016 and focused on improving watershed and stream health including reducing chronic sediment from an extensive road system built decades ago for timber management. It also created a sustainable motorized access system and loop-based motorized routes, including 44 miles of connector trails for motorcycle and ATV travel.

Phase 2 is a continuation of the original project and also incorporates vegetation management activities. The selected alternative would:

- Improve watershed conditions through management of a suitable transportation system
- Improve forest health and reduce potential fire severity
- Provide timber products and related jobs

The project proposes changes to access on existing roads and trails, storing and decommissioning unneeded roads and trails, building five new motorized connector trails and loop routes for ATV travel, and construction of several temporary roads.

Proposed treatments include commercial timber harvests, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning to improve forest health.

The draft DN/FONSI are available online at www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49700 and at the Darby Ranger District and Forest Supervisor's Office in Hamilton.

The draft decision is subject to public objection under Code of Federal Regulations §218. Objections may only be filed by those who previously submitted comments on the project. All objections must be submitted to the Forest Service by April 10, 2019.

Objections may be delivered or mailed to: USDA Forest Service, Northern Region, ATTN: Objection Reviewing Officer, 26 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, MT 59804. Electronic objections may be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Faxed objections may be submitted to (406) 329-3411. Please specify "Darby Lumber Lands – Phase II Project Objection" in the subject line.

Hand delivered objections must be delivered between 8am-4:30pm weekdays, excluding holidays. All objections are open to public inspection and will be posted to the Forest Service website.

For additional information contact Eric Winthers, District Ranger, Darby/Sula Ranger District at (406) 821-3913.

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Tod McKay
Public Affairs Officer

Forest Service
Bitterroot National Forest

p: 406-363-7122

c: 406-531-1130

tgmckay@fs.fed.us

1801 N. First

Hamilton, MT 59840

www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot



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