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NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot National Forest

www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 22, 2012

STOLEN SIGNS AT LAKE COMO

Hamilton, MT. – The Bitterroot National Forest is asking for the public’s help in identifying whoever is stealing signs from the Lake Como Recreation Area near Darby. In the last several months, someone has stolen 10 signs from the recreation area, including 4 stop signs and 6 recreation symbol signs. Forest officials also recently discovered an illegal dumpsite filled with trash on the north side of the lake. The cost of replacing the stolen signs and cleaning up the garbage is more than \$2,500.

The signs helped regulate traffic, ensure public safety, and inform forest users of site locations within the popular recreation area. Lake Como is the most utilized recreation site in the entire Northern Region of the Forest Service. It is extremely popular with boaters, horseback riders, mountain bikers, hikers, day users, campers, and x-country skiers. It is visited by more than 200,000 people annually.

“It’s really frustrating that we will have to use taxpayer dollars to replace stolen signs and clean up someone’s garbage,” said Darby Recreation Manager Erica Strayer. “We have invested a lot of our time and resources into upgrading and maintaining sites around Lake Como for the public to enjoy. To see someone intentionally and repeatedly return to the area to steal signs or dump trash is disturbing.”

Each year, the Bitterroot National Forest spends approximately \$25,000 replacing stolen and damaged signs, broken posts, repairing vandalized buildings, and picking up trash that has been dumped illegally on the National Forest.

Stealing signs and vandalism on Forest Service lands is prohibited and violators face substantial fines of up to \$5,000. Please respect your National Forest lands and sites and help the Forest Service cut back on the unnecessary costs associated with theft by reporting any illegal activity or vandalized property. Anyone with information about the stolen signs or illegal dumpsite at Lake Como is encouraged to call 1-800-TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668) or the Darby Ranger District at (406) 821-3913. Callers can remain anonymous.

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