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MAR 26 2020



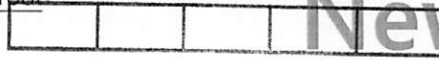
Bitterroot National Forest

Web: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot>

Facebook: [@discoverbitterrootnf](#)

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Ravalli County Commissioners



News Release

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Tod McKay

Forest Campgrounds, Rental Cabins, Day Use Sites Closing to Limit COVID-19 Spread

Hamilton, Montana (March 26, 2020) – The health and safety of visitors, as well as Forest Service employees and volunteers, is paramount during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are working to meet the social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to help reduce the spread of the virus. To support these efforts, effective March 27, 2020, all Bitterroot National Forest campgrounds, day use sites at Lake Como, Woods Cabin, and the East Fork Guard Station will be temporarily closed through April 30th. All outhouses/toilets on the Forest are also included in the closures.

Notification to cabin renters will be made as soon as possible and refunds will be processed. The Lake Como Recreation Area closures include the beach area, boat launch, picnic area, and campgrounds. The Como Trailhead and trails around the lake will remain open at this time.

“Last weekend was very busy at Lake Como, especially on the beach,” said Matt Anderson, Bitterroot Forest Supervisor. “With increased pressure on these developed sites and staffing challenges it has become very difficult to manage areas so they’re safe for visitors and our employees. It has become clear that the best course of action is to close these sites until it’s deemed safe to reopen them. This was a difficult decision that we didn’t make lightly and we appreciate people’s cooperation. We’re in this together.”

The closures will not impact other Bitterroot National Forest trails, trailheads, dispersed camping sites, or West Fork river access sites which remain open at this time. Bass Creek Recreation Area day use and trailheads still remain open. However, toilets located at these areas will be closed, based on CDC guidelines and recommendations for cleaning public facilities. We ask that the public recreate responsibly and please practice leave no trace principles and “pack it in-pack it out.”

Group facilities, such as Larry Creek Group Site, Three Sisters Group Site, and Fales Flat Group Site are currently closed but are slated to open in May. We will continue to assess the situation and will make a determination mid-April on whether or not the group sites will be opened. If the sites do not open, people with reservations will be

fully refunded. We suggest that people with reservations have a back-up plan in case the sites do not open up.

“We want the public to know that the forest is still open,” said Anderson. “We want people to get outside, stretch their legs, and stay active during these stressful times. Please make sure that you’re recreating responsibly which includes social distancing measures.”

Keep in mind that law enforcement and/or search and rescue operations may be limited due to the COVID-19 issues. High-risk activities such as rock climbing, etc. or backcountry activities that increase your chance of injury or distress should be avoided.

The Forest continues to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation. As we work through an unpredictable and rapidly changing environment, health and safety is our number one priority. We are committed to supporting our communities and fulfilling our mission as we all work together to minimize the impact and spread of the virus.

For a complete list of campgrounds and site closures visit: www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot, like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF or contact your local District office.

Stevensville Ranger District, 406-777-5461
Darby/Sula Ranger District, 406-821-3913
West Fork Ranger District, 406-821-3269
Supervisor’s Office – Hamilton, 406-363-7100

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