



Bitterroot National Forest

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News Release

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Tod McKay

Mud Creek Project to Include Public Comments on Forest Plan Amendments

Hamilton, Montana (February 8, 2021) – Over the past year, the Bitterroot National Forest has been planning the Mud Creek Project on the West Fork Ranger District. The project will address forest health, hazardous fuels, and road network concerns in the entire Mud Creek watershed immediately downstream from Painted Rocks Reservoir. The project encompasses approximately 48,486 acres and includes portions of Nelson Lake, Little West Fork, Lloyd Creek, Lower Blue Joint and Painted Rocks drainages.

During project scoping the Forest indicated the need to amend the Bitterroot Forest Plan standards for elk habitat objectives related to road densities and thermal cover. After further consideration, the Forest has determined it will need to conduct a project-specific Forest Plan amendment for old growth and coarse woody debris standards as well.

The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Mud Creek Project and associated project-specific Forest Plan amendments during the draft Environmental Assessment comment period. The Forest anticipates releasing the draft EA for comment later this month.

Proposed treatments include commercial timber harvest, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning to improve forest health and manage timber to provide forest products, jobs, and income to local communities.

The Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan has identified the area as a 'high priority' for fuels reduction within the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), including a need to reduce crown fire hazards adjacent to communities and private property.

The project may also include road decommissioning and storage of routes to improve elk security, along with improving habitat and forage for bighorn sheep, mule deer and other regionally sensitive species.

To learn more about the Mud Creek Vegetation Management Project and to view maps visit www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot. Click on 'Land and Resource Management', then 'Projects'. Printed copies are also available for review at the West Fork Ranger Station.

For more information or questions concerning the project, please contact Seth Carbonari, West Fork District Ranger at (406) 821-1212.

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