



Bitterroot National Forest

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News Release

Media Contact: (406) 363-7122
Tod McKay

Resource Advisory Committee Announces 2021 Projects

Hamilton, Montana (March 3, 2021) – The Ravalli County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) has approved 15 projects for funding. The projects will benefit National Forest System lands and ecosystems in Ravalli County. All total, the committee allocated \$404,000 in project funding.

The funds will support a wide diversity of projects in the Bitterroot Valley including new handicap accessible bridges on the Bass Creek Nature Trail, fighting and eradicating invasive weeds, reducing river sediment, maintaining and staffing the historic St. Mary Peak Lookout and mitigating bear-human conflicts on the Bitterroot National Forest, just to name a few. The following projects were approved:

| <u>Project</u> | <u>Funding</u> |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Bass Creek Nature Trail #392 Bridge Replacement | \$2,000 |
| 2. West Fork River Access Improvements | \$2,500 |
| 3. South Lake Como Recreation and Trail Sign Plan | \$4,500 |
| 4. Bitterroot Pollinator & Native Plant Reclamation & Recovery | \$12,705 |
| 5. Mitigating Bear-Human Conflicts on the Bitterroot NF | \$15,000 |
| 6. Rye Creek Road Surface Stabilization | \$15,000 |
| 7. Burnt Fork Creek Fisheries/Riparian/Recreation Improvements | \$17,000 |
| 8. Ravalli County Weed District Youth Bio-Control Program | \$21,375 |
| 9. White Memorial FAS-Hart Bench Trail and Trailhead | \$26,500 |
| 10. SBFC St. Mary Peak Lookout Volunteer Stewardship Program | \$27,720 |
| 11. East Fork Riparian Improvement | \$34,500 |
| 12. Willow Creek Cross Road Culvert | \$35,000 |
| 13. Bitterroot New Invader Hot Spots Treatment | \$57,800 |
| 14. Bertie Lord Creek FR 5786 Culvert Replacement | \$60,000 |
| 15. Bitterroot Bighorn Sheep Habitat Enhancement – Phase One | \$72,400 |
| Total: | \$404,000 |

Since 2001, the RAC has approved nearly \$2.5 million in funding for projects that benefit National Forest system lands in Ravalli County.

“The RAC program is such a benefit to Ravalli County and its residents, the Bitterroot National Forest, and all the visitors that find our valley so special,” stated Deb Gale, RAC Chairperson. “All of us on the RAC committee want to thank all the presenters for the hard work on their proposals and we look forward to visiting some of the projects this field season.”

RAC projects must meet established criteria and improve federal lands in the following areas: roads, trails, infrastructure maintenance, soil and forest ecosystem health, watershed restoration, maintenance and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat, control of noxious weeds, and re-establishment of native species. At least 50 percent of all project funds are dedicated to restoring streams and watersheds; or road maintenance, decommissioning or removal. Projects may be on private land but must show a direct benefit to National Forest System lands.

“I am pleased that we were able to reconvene the Ravalli RAC and distribute this important funding,” said Eric Winthers, Darby/Sula District Ranger. “The work our partners and employees put into developing these project proposals was excellent and we have a good variety of projects that will benefit Forest Lands in Ravalli County for many years to come.”

Resource Advisory Committees were established in 2000 under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. In addition to approving project funding, the RAC is also dedicated to improving collaborative relationships. For more information contact District Ranger Eric Winthers at (406) 821-3913.

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