



Bitterroot National Forest

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News Release

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Great American Outdoors Act Funds Local Projects

Hamilton, Montana (March 10, 2021) – The Bitterroot National Forest is pleased to announce that as part of the Great American Outdoors Act six local projects have been selected for fiscal year 2021. The selected projects will be the first round of improvements to address deferred maintenance on the Forest while improving our visitor's experience.

These projects are part of the \$285 million investment made possible by the newly created National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund, established in 2020 by the Great American Outdoors Act. These funds will allow the USDA Forest Service to implement more than 500 infrastructure improvement projects essential to the continued use and enjoyment of national forests and grasslands. These funds are critical in helping to reduce the Forest Service's \$5.2 billion deferred maintenance backlog and is an important step in restoring what our visitors love about national forests in the Northern Region.

This year's selected projects are:

1. **Motorized/Non-Motorized Trail Improvements & Drainage Repairs:** Project will fund backlogged deferred maintenance needs on forest trails including trail clearing, brushing, improved drainage, and tread repairs.
2. **Gird Point Road #714:** Road resurfacing and repairs to this high use forest road that accesses the popular Gird Point Lookout Rental Cabin. Road is also used by hunters, berry pickers, and others as it is located near Hamilton.
3. **Developed Campground Maintenance and Improvements:** Project will fund deferred maintenance needs at high use forest campgrounds where fees are currently charged, or new fees are being implemented.
4. **St. Mary's Road #739:** Road resurfacing and repairs to this high use forest road that accesses the historic St. Mary's Peak Lookout. The fire lookout is visited annually by 1,500+ visitors. Road is currently in very poor condition, especially for hauling horse trailers. Project also includes improvements to McCalla Lake Road, which is currently impassable due to large rocks in the road.

5. **Bitterroot Valley Recreation Sites – Roadside Brushing:** Project will provide brushing (clearing overgrown vegetation) on 100 miles of forest road leading to popular recreation sites. Many recreation routes are currently brushed-in.
6. **Wilderness Trails Maintenance:** Project will provide trail clearing, drainage structure repairs, and tread improvements on forest wilderness trails. Outfitters and rural economies will benefit by the increased access for the American public.

The Great American Outdoors Act authorizes funding under the Legacy Restoration Fund annually through fiscal year 2025. Forest Service economists estimate that projects funded with these dollars will support roughly 4,400 jobs and contribute \$420 million to the gross domestic product.

Forest Service infrastructure supports more than 300 million recreationists, first responders such as wildland firefighters, and other users of Forest Service roads. Each year, visitors to the national forests contribute almost \$11 billion to the U.S. economy, which sustains more than 148,000 jobs.

For more information on these projects please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/gaoa>.

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Background

The [Great American Outdoors Act](#) responds to the growing \$5.9 billion backlog of deferred maintenance on national forest and grasslands, which includes \$3.7 billion for roads and bridges and \$1.5 billion for visitor centers, campgrounds and other facilities. The Forest Service currently administers more than 370,000 miles of roads, 13,400 bridges, 159,000 miles of trails, 1,700 dams and reservoirs, 1,500 communications sites, 27,000 recreation sites, and 40,000 facilities of other types. In addition to helping address deferred maintenance for these critical facilities and infrastructure, the Great American Outdoors Act will help the Forest Service to continue supporting rural economies and communities in and around national forests and grasslands across the country.