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Ravalli County Commissioners

Dear Interested Party,

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With this letter, I am inviting you to comment on the environmental assessment (EA) for the Mud Creek Project on the Bitterroot National Forest.

The West Fork Ranger District of the Bitterroot National Forest is proposing the Mud Creek project to address forest health, hazardous fuels, and road network concerns in the West Fork Bitterroot River-Rombo Creek watershed and portions of the Nez Perce Fork-Nelson Lake, Little West Fork, West Fork Bitterroot River-Lloyd Creek, Lower Blue Joint, and West Fork Bitterroot River-Painted Rocks Lake watersheds in the Bitterroot Mountain Range, southwest of Darby, Montana. The project area is approximately 48,523 acres; however, most vegetation treatments will focus on the wildland urban interface (WUI). The project will use a condition-based, phased approach to implementation. Throughout the implementation period, the public, tribes, and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to collaborate with the Forest Service on treatment identification and prioritization.

We will accept comments on the proposed project for 30 calendar days following yesterday's publication of the legal notice of the opportunity to comment in the *Ravalli Republic*. During the comment period, we will host an online public webinar to provide information on the proposal. The EA is available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55744>. Limited paper copies of the EA are available by contacting the West Fork Ranger Station at 406-821-3269.

The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and is subject to the project-level predecisional administrative review process (36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B).

Online public webinar

Date and time: Tuesday, April 6, from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm MT.

How to connect: Please see the project website for webinar login information. A document with instructions for joining the webinar is available under the "Analysis" tab. We will host the webinar via the Microsoft Teams software, which can be accessed through a web browser.

Format: The presentation will last approximately 30 minutes, and the remainder of the time will be for questions and answers.

How to comment

Specific written comments (§218.2) on the proposed project will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of this notice in the *Ravalli Republic*. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. The regulations



prohibit extending the length of the comment period. Specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider (36 CFR 218.2).

Only individuals or entities (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) who submit timely and specific written comments about this proposed project or activity during this or another public comment period established by the responsible official will be eligible to file an objection. Other eligibility requirements are defined by 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3) and include name, postal address, the title of the project, and signature or other verification of identity upon request and identification of the individual or entity who authored the comments. Individual members of an entity must submit their own individual comments to have eligibility to object as an individual. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. A timely submission will be determined as outlined in 36 CFR 218.25(a)(4). Names and contact information (including addresses and e-mail addresses) submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Please submit comments to Seth Carbonari, West Fork District Ranger, using one of the following methods:

Submit comments online via the project's public participation portal (preferred method):
<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=55744>.

Mail comments to: West Fork Ranger District, 6735 West Fork Rd, Darby, MT 59829.

Hand deliver comments to the same address. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays (FAX- 406-821-1211).

Please include "Comments on Mud Creek Project" in the subject line for all electronic or hard copy comments.

Thank you for your valuable involvement in this planning process. If you have any questions or if you need additional information regarding this proposal, please contact me at 406-821-1212 or seth.carbonari@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



SETH CARBONARI District Ranger