



## Forest Service News Release

**Media Contact:** Tod McKay

(406) 363-7122

[tod.mckay@usda.gov](mailto:tod.mckay@usda.gov)

**Facebook:** [@discoverbitterrootnf](https://www.facebook.com/discoverbitterrootnf)

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot>

### Prescribed Burn Completed at Bass Creek Recreation Area

**Hamilton, MT, April 17** —The Stevensville Ranger District has completed prescribed burn activities in the Larry Bass Unit, within the Bass Creek Recreation Area north of Stevensville. Managers were successful in treating the entire target area of 250 acres. Smoke will likely continue to be visible at times and may settle in low lying areas this evening. Smoke could be visible for several days.

Firefighters will remain on scene to patrol and monitor the perimeter as long as necessary. The recreation area will remain closed until Sunday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. The closure includes the popular Larry Creek Trails and Horse Trailer Parking, Bass Creek Nature and Physical Fitness Trails, and the Bass Creek Trail #4 and Trailhead. See attached map for more details.

Forest officials would like to thank the public for their support and cooperation during the closure of the popular recreation area. “I know everyone is anxious to get back on the trails and I am grateful for the public’s patience and cooperation this week,” said Stevensville District Ranger Steve Brown. “This work ties in with the National Cohesive Strategy’s goals of restoration and maintenance of resiliency in these fire adapted ecosystems, moving us toward our objective of an overall healthier landscape.”

Prescribed burns are one of the most effective tools available to resource managers for restoring fire-adapted ecosystems. The burns mimic natural fires by reducing forest fuels, recycling nutrients and increasing habitat diversity. The Larry Bass prescribed burn specifically removes dead forest fuels, provides community protection and promotes forest health.

The treatment area included slash left behind from a 700-acre thinning operation several years ago. The goal of the burn was to reduce hazardous fuels and fire hazards created by dead, dying, and diseased trees impacted by mountain pine beetles. The broadcast burn will also help reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire, improve overall forest health, and protect many of the areas large and distinctive ponderosa pine trees.

Firefighters would like to remind horseback riders, hikers, and other recreationists who are planning on visiting Bass Creek when it re-opens that some of their favorite trails and areas may look a little different following the prescribed burn and to be aware that some hazards may remain. Warning signs will be posted in the burn area to remind people of the potential hazards. Some examples are unstable dead trees that could fall over (especially in higher winds), burned-out stump and root holes, loose rocks and debris, or ash and pine needles that can make the trail slippery. If you do discover a hazardous condition, please report it to the Stevensville Ranger District (406-777-5461) as soon as possible.

While fire crews remain on the scene this afternoon, the forest anticipates re-opening Bass Creek Recreation Area to the public by tomorrow, April 18 at noon. For the latest information visit the *Discover Bitterroot National Forest* Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF](http://www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF).

For more information about spring burning projects please contact your local ranger district. For burn updates, maps, and photos of project areas, visit us at [www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot](http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot), or <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7351>.

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