



## Forest Service News Release

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### Forest Welcomes Visitors for 4<sup>th</sup> of July

**Hamilton, MT, June 28** — With the 4<sup>th</sup> of July right around the corner, the Bitterroot National Forest is a great place to get away from the noise of fireworks and enjoy your holiday. A few considerations will help ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment:

- ✓ **Fireworks are not permitted** on all National Forests year-round. No fireworks of any kind may be discharged anywhere within the Bitterroot National Forest, regardless of weather conditions or holidays. Please leave them at home. Violations are punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 or six months in jail. Anyone who starts a wildfire can be held liable for suppression costs which can be substantial.
- ✓ **All campgrounds on the Forest are open and ready for visitors.** Campgrounds fill up quickly. For a complete list of campgrounds and to determine if your favorite campground is one in which you can reserve a site, visit our website at [www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot](http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot) and click on the *Recreation/Cabins and Camping* sections.
- ✓ **Campgrounds must be occupied the first night.** Most campgrounds are first come, first served. Sites must be occupied the first night; no setting out chairs or coolers days before actually occupying the campsite.
- ✓ **Never leave a campfire unattended** and make sure your coals are cool to the touch before you leave. Forecasts are for a hot and dry 4<sup>th</sup> of July and visitors need to be fire safe. One spark is all it takes to start a wildfire.
- ✓ **Be prepared for changing weather conditions** including the potential for afternoon thunderstorms.
- ✓ **Potentially dangerous heat wave** predicted through July 3<sup>rd</sup>; stay hydrated, stay in the shade, and monitor signs of heat-related illnesses.
- ✓ **Expect heavier traffic than normal on forest roads and trails** over the holiday. Drive defensively and notify us of any downed trees or road damage so repairs can be made. Some trails and roads may not be open at higher elevations due to snow, high water, washouts, or trees that have fallen. Please stay on the trails and roads and do not create new trails to get around hazards.
- ✓ **Pack it In—Pack it Out** is the best practice for all of your garbage.
- ✓ **Be cautious around flowing waters** and especially at creek crossings.

The gate at Lost Horse Road #429 on the Darby/Sula Ranger District is open but please be advised that the road is rough (deep ruts & wash boarded), muddy in places, and not recommended for trailers or low clearance vehicles. Schumaker Campground and Bear Creek Pass are open, but with no services.

A reminder for those heading to Lake Como, you will need a recreation pass for parking. Passes are \$5/vehicle or \$30 for a season pass and are available at all Forest Service offices, area retailers including Mr. T's and People's Market in Darby, Angler's Roost, Lone Pine and Riverside Conoco, Town Pump South, and Bob Ward's in Hamilton, and on-site at the recreation area. Day use fees and camping fees are charged at Lake Como from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend. The fees are used for the operations and maintenance of the recreation area. Drinking water is available at Lake Como.

There have been recent reports of bear activity at several campgrounds. With the arrival of summer, it's important to secure all unattended food and attractants and always keep a clean camp. Keep tents and sleeping bags free of odors, avoid cooking smelly foods, and don't sleep in the same clothes you wore while cooking. For more information about recreating safely in bear country visit [www.bebearaware.org](http://www.bebearaware.org).

The Magruder Road Corridor between Darby, MT and Elk City, ID is currently impassable 1.5 miles past Observation Point due to snow. Nez Perce Pass is open to Paradise Campground. Contact the West Fork Ranger District for road updates. Magruder Road is suitable for high-clearance vehicles only. Travelers are advised to carry a chainsaw in case of a fallen tree on the road and should be aware that there is no cell phone coverage or services for 120 miles.

Forest Service offices will be closed on Monday, July 5 in observance of the federal holiday. Please call your local ranger station ahead of time to obtain a firewood permit, request forest maps, or ask any questions you may have before your visit to the forest. Regular office hours resume Tuesday, July 6. We wish everyone an enjoyable and safe 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday!

#### Bitterroot National Forest

West Fork Ranger District, (406) 821-3269

Darby/Sula Ranger District, (406) 821-3913

Stevensville Ranger District, (406) 777-5461

Supervisor's Office - Hamilton, (406) 363-7100

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