



Forest Service News Release

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Christmas Tree Permits Available Online This Holiday Season

Hamilton, MT, November 5 — Cutting your own Christmas tree is a special holiday outing available to those who live near National Forest Lands. There's an abundant choice of trees and species on the Bitterroot National Forest. In order to remove a Christmas tree from the National Forest, you need to have a Christmas tree permit.

This year, the Forest Service is again offering permits to harvest Christmas trees online through Recreation.gov. Bitterroot National Forest permits are now available by visiting www.recreation.gov/tree-permits.

The Forest Service moved permit sales online as an added convenience for visitors, as well as to provide an alternative to in-person transactions at offices that still have limited in-person services due to the pandemic or other factors. In addition, free Christmas tree permits can still be obtained by mail or by visiting a Bitterroot National Forest Office.

- ✓ **Obtaining a permit on www.Recreation.gov:** Visit Recreation.gov and search for Bitterroot National Forest Christmas Tree Permits. It is important to carefully read the overview and need-to-know information prior to printing the permit. Even though the permits are free, visitors will need to set up or login to a Recreation.gov account. There is an additional \$2.50 transaction fee charged by Recreation.gov for online permits.
- ✓ **Obtaining a permit by visiting a Ranger Station:** All Bitterroot National Forest Offices will have free Christmas tree permits available this season in a designated pick-up area. Please call ahead so staff can ensure permits are ready for collection. Permits may be available for pick up outside office doors at locations that currently have limited in-person services.
- ✓ **Obtaining a permit by mail:** Call your local Ranger Station on the Bitterroot National Forest and provide your information and you will receive a free permit in the mail within 2-4 business days.

Customers are limited to one permit each, but each permit is good for harvesting up to three Christmas trees. Please display your permit on the dashboard of your vehicle when you go out to harvest the tree(s). Permits are good for all National Forests in Montana. Christmas tree permits will not be sold at local vendors this year, as in previous seasons

No special areas on the Bitterroot National Forest are designated for Christmas tree cutting. Please cut your tree at least 200 feet from well-traveled roads, flowing water, campgrounds, and recreation sites, and do not harvest within designated Wilderness areas.

Here are some additional tips for you to get the best tree possible and help manage the forest for years to come.

1. Taking a tree from an overcrowded area will give the remaining trees more space, moisture, and light to grow.
2. Cutting is not allowed in restricted areas such as existing timber sale areas or previously thinned areas.
3. Please do not cut down trees taller than 12 feet, cut out the top of a tree, or leave a stump higher than eight inches.
4. Be sure you are cutting your tree on National Forest land. Maps of the National Forest may be purchased by calling any Forest Service office Mon-Fri. 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., or online at www.fs.fed.us/recreation/nationalforeststore.
5. Be prepared for winter conditions and take a vehicle equipped with 4-wheel drive, snow tires or chains. Start early since winter days are shorter. Keep a watchful eye for snowmobiles and other recreationists walking, skiing, or sledding on back roads.
6. If your tree won't be set up right away, store it in a cool area. When you're ready to bring it indoors, cut at least an inch off the bottom. The tree will be thirsty so make sure there is always plenty of water in the tree stand. If the base dries out, resin will form over the cut end and the tree will not be able to absorb water causing it to dry out quickly. Most fresh-cut trees should last at least five weeks before drying out if properly cared for.
7. Permits are for personal use only and limited to three trees per family. If you want to remove Christmas trees for fundraising or boughs for commercial use, please call the Darby/Sula Ranger District at (406) 821-3913.

For more information contact the Bitterroot National Forest office near you or visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot. Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF.

We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season!

Bitterroot National Forest – Hamilton 363-7100

Stevensville Ranger District - 777-5461

Darby/Sula Ranger District - 821-3913

West Fork Ranger District - 821-3269

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