



Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. First

Hamilton, MT 59840

Web: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot>

News

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Forest Seeks Comments on Project

Hamilton, Montana (February 1, 2023) – The Bitterroot National Forest has released its draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the programmatic amendment to the Bitterroot Forest Land Management Plan and is inviting the public to review and make comments on the proposal.

The forest is proposing to amend components of the Forest Plan involving elk habitat, old growth, snags, and coarse woody debris. The primary purpose of the project is to apply the best available science to update some key components requiring immediate attention ahead of the longer-term Forest Plan Revision process.

Current plan standards for elk habitat are based on outdated science and the proposed components will incorporate recent research that considers forage, distance from open roads, and hunting pressure in managing elk habitat.

The proposed change to the definition of old growth forest is based on habitat type conditions relevant to the local Bitterroot National Forest and will result in additional acres of old growth being identified and inventoried. The amendment will bring old growth management in line with the general approach used by the Forest Service across the Northern Region and nationally (to apply Green et al). Snag and coarse woody debris components will resolve discrepancies in the existing plan and maintain the valuable structure, function, and process to the forest ecosystem that snags, and coarse wood provide.

Project planning was completed with participation and input from local collaborative organizations and partners such as the Ravalli County Collaborative, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

The draft environmental assessment is available online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57302>.

Public comments specific to this project and/or to individual sites and resources are valuable in helping the Forest Service identify concerns, develop alternatives, and refine the analysis to focus on issues. Comments are due 30 days from the appearance of the legal notice in the Ravalli Republic.

Submit comments to Kimberly Smolt, Project Manager, by one of the following methods: online: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public//CommentInput?Project=57302> (preferred); mail: Bitterroot National Forest, 1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840; FAX: (406) 363-7159; or hand deliver comments to the address above between 8am-4:30pm weekdays, excluding holidays.

Comments should include: 1) name, address, phone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of the project on which the comments are being submitted; and 3) substantive comments including specific facts and supporting information for the Responsible Official to consider. Please include "Comments on BNF Plan Amendment" in the subject line for all electronic or hard copy comments.

For additional information contact Kimberly Smolt, Special Projects Manager at kimberly.smolt@usda.gov. Stay in touch with us through www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot and www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF.

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