



Forest Service News Release

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Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Released for Gold Butterfly Project

Hamilton, MT, February 3 — The Bitterroot National Forest released the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for the Gold Butterfly Project, a proposed vegetation management and fuels reduction project in the Sapphire Mountains east of Corvallis. The project is located on the Stevensville and Darby Ranger Districts between St. Clair Creek to the south and Burnt Fork Creek to the north.

The FSEIS discusses the analysis for project-specific Forest Plan amendments that align the management of old growth stands to the best available scientific information. It also updates and clarifies information in the 2019 Gold Butterfly Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The Gold Butterfly Project is designed to:

- Improve forest resilience to natural disturbances like fire, insects, and diseases
- Reduce chronic sediment sources in the Willow Creek watershed
- Improve water quality and bull trout habitat
- Restore or improve key habitat including meadows and aspen
- Manage timber to provide forest products, jobs, and income to local communities
- Promote resilience in old growth and retain old growth status in all treatment units

About 90% of proposed treatment acres are within an area designated for insect and disease treatment because of dense pockets of dead and dying trees. The area is impacted by mountain pine beetle, Douglas-fir bark beetle, dwarf mistletoe, and western spruce budworm. The proposed treatments include commercial timber harvest, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning to improve forest health.

The Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan identified most of the area as a 'high priority' for fuels reduction in the Wildland Urban Interface.

More information about the Gold Butterfly Project, including the FSEIS is available online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=51486> or at the Stevensville Ranger District and Bitterroot Forest Supervisor's Office.

For additional information concerning the Gold Butterfly Project, contact Steve Brown, Stevensville District Ranger at (406) 777-5461 or steve.brown2@usda.gov.

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