



Forest Service News Release

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Annual Climbing Restrictions in Mill Creek Canyon

Hamilton, MT, February 2 — Even though spring doesn't arrive until next month, the Stevensville Ranger District is reminding everyone of the annual climbing closure in the Mill Creek area north of Hamilton to allow for nesting of cliff-dwelling raptors. Beginning February 1st, several climbing routes are closed each year to prevent disturbance to these known raptor nesting sites.

On the north side of Mill Creek, the spring raptor closure will be the same as last year and includes the "Pie for Strength" climbing area. The closure also includes cliffs on the south side of the canyon due to the presence of additional nests.

Maps are posted at area trailheads and on the Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) website. Forest Service Wildlife Biologists plan to visit the area later this spring to determine the presence or absence of birds using the nests. If the nests are not active, the restrictions will be lifted.

The area is a popular destination for hikers, horseback riders, and rock climbers. Forest officials want to remind climbers of their responsibility to regulate use and self-police their activities by following the "Leave No Trace" and "Pack it In, Pack it Out" principles. Copies of the "Leave No Trace Climbing" brochure are available at all BNF offices and at trailhead bulletin boards. The area will be monitored for compliance.

The BNF is undertaking the development of a comprehensive Climbing Management Plan (CMP) with the purpose of promoting sustainable climbing activities into the future. The plan will seek to reduce conflicts, minimize impacts to resource values, and protect the unique climbing attributes found on the forest. To learn more about the CMP or to view climbing tips and recommendations visit www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot. Click on Recreation and Climbing.

For more information, contact the Stevensville Ranger District at (406) 777-5461. Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverTheBitterroot.

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