



Bitterroot National Forest

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

News

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Forest Plan Amendment – Analysis and Draft Decision Released

Hamilton, Montana (April 21, 2023) – The Bitterroot National Forest has released the Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) for the programmatic amendment to the Bitterroot Forest Land Management Plan.

The forest is planning to amend components of its 1987 Forest Plan involving elk habitat, old growth, snags, and coarse woody debris. The primary purpose of the amendment is to apply the best available science to update some key components requiring immediate attention ahead of the longer-term Forest Plan Revision process. The new changes would apply forest-wide and consider more recent literature and updated metrics than was available 35-years ago when the plan was first adopted.

The Forest is planning to implement Alternative C, which proposes the following:

- Changing components for elk habitat away from road densities in third order drainages to those that focus on available nutrition for elk.
- Adopting a locally-based definition for old growth forest, based on habitat type conditions relevant to the Bitterroot NF. The amendment will result in additional acres of old growth being identified and inventoried and brings old growth management in line with the general approach used by the Forest Service across the Northern Region and nationally.
- Resolving discrepancies regarding coarse woody debris by management area and providing guidance for the retention of snags and coarse woody debris based on habitat types and fuel models.

The environmental assessment and draft decision, along with other supporting documents are available on the project website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57302>.

The draft decision is subject to public objection under Code of Federal Regulations §218 and 219. Objections may only be filed by those who previously submitted comments on the project. All objections must be submitted to the Forest Service within 45 days of the legal notice publication in the Ravalli Republic newspaper.

The objection reviewing officer is Daniel McKeague, Deputy Regional Forester. Electronic objections are preferred and must be submitted to the Objection Reviewing Officer online at <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?project=57302>. Please specify "Bitterroot Forest Plan Amendment Objection" in the subject line.

Written objections may be submitted via regular mail to: Reviewing Officer, Northern Regional Office, Attn: Bitterroot Forest Plan Amendment, 26 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, MT 59804.

Objections sent by private carrier or hand delivery must be addressed to: Reviewing Officer, Northern Regional Office, 26 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, MT 59804. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 4:30pm, excluding Federal holidays, for hand delivery.

All objections are open to public inspection and will be posted to the Forest Service website.

For additional information contact Kimberly Smolt, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, at kimberly.smolt@usda.gov or at (406) 360-8996. Stay in touch with us through www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot and www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF.

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