



Forest Service News Release

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4th of July on the Bitterroot National Forest

Hamilton, MT, June 29 — With the 4th of July right around the corner, the Bitterroot National Forest is a great place to get away from the noise of fireworks and enjoy your holiday. A few considerations will help ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment:

- **Fireworks are not permitted** on all National Forests year-round. No fireworks, exploding targets, or any other pyrotechnic devices of any kind may be discharged anywhere within the Bitterroot National Forest, regardless of weather conditions or holidays. Leave them at home. Violations are punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 or six months in jail. Anyone who starts a wildfire can be held liable for suppression costs which can be substantial.
- **Campgrounds on the Forest are open and ready for visitors.** Campgrounds fill up quickly. For a complete list of campgrounds and to determine if your favorite campground is one in which you can reserve a site, visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot and click on the *Visit Us* pull down menu and select *Recreation*.
- **Campgrounds must be occupied the first night.** Most campgrounds are first come, first served. Sites must be occupied the first night; no setting out chairs or coolers days before actually occupying the campsite.
- **Never leave a campfire unattended** and make sure your campfire is cold to the touch before you leave. When leaving your campsite, douse the fire with water, stir, and check your campfire for heat. One spark is all it takes to start a wildfire.
- **Be prepared for changing weather conditions** including the predicted afternoon thunderstorms.
- **Expect heavier traffic than normal on forest roads and trails** over the holiday. Drive defensively and notify us of any downed trees or road damage so repairs can be made. Some trails and roads may not be open at higher elevations due to snow, high water, washouts, or trees that have fallen. Please stay on the designated trails and roads and do not create new trails to get around hazards.
- **Pack it In–Pack it Out** is the best practice for all of your belongings and garbage. The message is simple: whatever you bring in, you are responsible for bringing it out.
- **Be cautious around flowing waters** and especially at creek crossings.

A reminder for those heading to Lake Como, you will need a recreation pass for parking. Passes are \$5/vehicle or \$30 for a season pass and are available at all Forest Service offices, area retailers including Mr. T's and People's Market in Darby, Angler's Roost, Lone Pine and Riverside Conoco, and Town Pump South in Hamilton, and on-site at the recreation area. Day use fees are charged at Lake Como from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend. The fees are used for the operations and maintenance of the recreation area. Drinking water is available at Lake Como.

There have been bear sightings near some recreation sites. With the arrival of summer, it's important to secure all unattended food and attractants and always keep a clean camp. Keep tents and sleeping bags free

of odors, avoid cooking smelly foods, and don't sleep in the same clothes you wore while cooking. For more information about recreating safely in bear country visit www.bebearaware.org.

Road Updates & Closures

Lost Horse Road #429 on the Darby/Sula Ranger District is open and suitable for high-clearance vehicles. Trailers are not recommended.

The Magruder Road Corridor between Darby, MT and Elk City, ID is still inaccessible due to snow. Nez Perce Pass is open to Paradise Campground. Contact the West Fork Ranger District for road updates. Magruder Road is suitable for high-clearance vehicles only. Travelers are advised to carry a chainsaw in case of a fallen tree on the road and should be aware that there is no cell phone coverage or services for 120 miles. As a caution for travelers when the route opens, there is only unleaded gas available in Elk City, no diesel.

Thunder Mountain Road (Forest Road #5685) closure at milepost 1.1 (approximately 8 miles from Hughes Creek Road intersection). Road is impassable due to ongoing culvert replacement. The loop from Hughes to Beaver Creek cannot be driven. Signs are posted to inform public.

White Stallion Road (Forest Road #273) remains closed at the Sleeping Child Road intersection due to ongoing bridge replacement. Loop from Rye Creek to Sleeping Child cannot be driven due to this closure. Signs are posted to inform public.

Holiday Office Closure

Forest Service offices will be closed on Tuesday, July 4 in observance of the federal holiday. Please call your local ranger station ahead of time to obtain a firewood permit, request forest maps, or ask any questions you may have before your visit to the forest. We wish everyone an enjoyable and safe 4th of July holiday!

Bitterroot National Forest Offices

West Fork Ranger District, (406) 821-3269

Darby/Sula Ranger District, (406) 821-3913

Stevensville Ranger District, (406) 777-5461

Supervisor's Office - Hamilton, (406) 363-7100

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