

Ravalli County Commissioners Office

From: McKay, Tod G -FS <tgmckay@fs.fed.us>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2015 10:00 AM
Subject: News Release: Memorial Day weekend on the Bitterroot National Forest
Attachments: Memorial Day 2015.docx; Campers.jpg; Three Frogs.jpg

**** See latest campgrounds and road/trail information for Memorial Day weekend along with photos of campers at Lake Como.**

Memorial Day Weekend on the Bitterroot National Forest

Hamilton, Montana (May 19, 2015) – Memorial Day weekend marks the traditional kickoff of the summer season. The 1.6 million acre Bitterroot National Forest offers unmatched recreational opportunities including nearly 250 campsites in 26 campgrounds, hiking on more than 1,500 miles of trails, boating, biking, horseback riding and more.

Forest officials hope visitors will incorporate the following safety tips, along with the status of campgrounds, trails and roads, into their adventures during the upcoming Memorial Day weekend.

Key Safety Messages:

- Be prepared for changing weather conditions. Temperatures at night are still cool and isolated thunderstorms and showers are in the forecast this weekend.
- Many campgrounds and hiking trails are located near streams that are running fast and high. Recent warm temperatures are causing increasing snow melt leading to higher water levels. Please be extremely cautious around flowing waters and especially at creek crossings.
- Expect heavier traffic than normal on forest roads and trails over the holiday weekend. Drive defensively and notify the Forest Service of any flooding conditions, plugged culverts, downed trees or road damage, so repairs can be made.
- Stay away from soft and muddy roads as this is unsafe and can damage the roadbed, leading to expensive repairs. Driving around snow drifts can damage vegetation and soil.
- Bring potable drinking water as some campground water systems have not been opened yet.
- Never leave a campfire unattended and make sure your coals are cool to the touch before you leave.
- Be extremely careful when traveling and camping around areas of dead trees including burned areas or beetle killed patches.
- Contact your local Forest Service office to find out if your favorite campground is open. See attached list of campgrounds/recreation sites. Please contact the appropriate Ranger Station for

updates as the opening of some sites may be delayed due to wet conditions and unexpected repairs.

Darby Ranger District – (406) 821-3913

- **Lake Como Recreation Area: **PLEASE NOTE** - there is no potable water available at this time due to water system repairs; please contact the Darby Ranger District for updates pertaining to the water system.**
 - Lower Como Campground = Open with 11 pull-through sites, electrical, accessible toilets, and garbage service. Potable water is not available at this time. Please plan accordingly. No reservations - first-come, first-served site selection. Camp host on site.
 - Three Frogs Campground = Open with 20 campsites, accessible toilets, and garbage service. No reservations - first-come, first-served site selection. Camp host on site. No potable water.
 - Lake Como Picnic Area and Trailhead = Open
 - Lake Como Beach = Open. Swim lines will be installed after Memorial Day weekend.
 - Lake Como Boat Launch = Open. Dock will be installed this week.
 - Rock Creek Horse Camp = Open with 11 campsites, hitch rails, feed troughs, accessible toilets and garbage service. No water. No reservations - first-come, first-served.
 - Three Sisters Group Site = Open and currently taking reservations. Can accommodate groups of 75 people. Pavilion, picnic tables, BBQ grills, toilets. To reserve, call the Darby Ranger District.
 - Woods Cabin = Already reserved for the entire summer. To reserve your fall/winter dates visit www.recreation.gov
 - Recreation Passes – Day Use Fees = Required beginning Saturday, May 23. Cost of the passes are \$5/vehicle or \$30 for a season pass and are available at all Forest Service offices, area retailers, and on-site at the recreation area. Day use fees and camping fees are charged at Lake Como from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend.
- **Black Bear Campground** - Open with 6 campsites and accessible toilet. No water. 'Pack it in, pack it out' garbage. No reservations. First-come, first-served.
- **Lost Horse Road** is only accessible five miles beyond the intersection with Lick Creek Road. The road is closed to motorized beyond the gate due to soft road conditions.
- **Skalkaho Pass (State Highway 38)** is currently closed. For the latest road information visit www.mdt.mt.gov or Dial 511.

Stevensville Ranger District: (406) 777-5461

- **Bass Creek Recreation Area:**
 - **Charles Water Campground** - Open with 26 campsites, and accessible toilet. Camp host on site. Potable water and trash services available. No reservations – first-come, first-served site selection.
 - **Larry Creek Group Camp** - Available for reservation through the National Recreation Reservation System - www.recreation.gov or call 1-877-444-6777.
- **Blodgett Campground** – Open with 5 campsites and accessible toilet. There is no drinking water available this year. 'Pack it in, pack it out' garbage. Camp host on site. No reservations.

- Gold Creek Campground – Open with 4 campsites and accessible toilet. No water. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage. No reservations.

West Fork Ranger District: (406) 821-3269

- Rombo Campground – Open with 15 campsites, garbage, and accessible toilet. Camp host on site. There is no drinking water – working on system repairs. To reserve campsites visit www.recreation.gov
- Alta Campground – Open with 15 campsites, water, garbage, and accessible toilet. To reserve campsites visit www.recreation.gov
- Sam Billings Campground – Open with 12 campsites and accessible toilet. No water. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage. No reservations – first-come, first-served site selection.
- Slate Creek Campground – Open with 12 campsites and accessible toilet. No water. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage. No reservations – first-come, first-served.
- Fales Flat Campground – Open with 3 campsites and accessible toilet. No water. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage. No reservations – first-come, first-served. To reserve group site visit www.recreation.gov
- Nez Perce Pass is open. Contact the West Fork office for road updates.

Sula Ranger District: (406) 821-3201

- Spring Gulch Campground – Open with 10 campsites, water, garbage, and accessible toilet. Camp host on site. To reserve campsites visit www.recreation.gov
- Indian Trees Campground - Open with 15 campsites, water, garbage, and accessible toilet. Camp host on site. To reserve campsites visit www.recreation.gov
- Martin Creek Campground - Open with 7 campsites. No water available yet*, accessible toilet. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage. No reservations – first-come, first-served site selection.
- Jennings Campground - Open with 4 campsites and accessible toilet. No water. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage.
- Crazy Creek Campground – Open with 7 campsites, no water available yet*, and accessible toilet. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage. No reservations – first-come, first-served site selection.
- Crazy Creek Horse Camp – Open with 7 campsites, and accessible toilet. No water. ‘Pack it in, pack it out’ garbage. No reservations – first-come, first-served site selection.
- Warm Spring Campground – Currently closed due to water system repairs. Will be open to the public once repairs are finished.

*Working on water system repairs and water testing. Please call the Sula Ranger Station for updates on water systems.

A new 16-day stay limit is in place for the Bitterroot National Forest - except for the portion of the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness in Idaho. The reason the stay limit has changed from a 14-day limit to a 16-day limit is to provide a consistent stay limit restriction across National Forest lands in Region 1.

A Food Storage Order is also in place for the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness, located on the Bitterroot and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests. The purpose of the food storage order is to minimize adverse interactions between bears and humans.

Please contact the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Office at (406) 363-7100 for more information about the stay limit order or the food storage order.

The Bitterroot National Forest also offers visitors a unique recreational experience at one of our many rental cabins and lookouts. There are three rental lookouts that provide stunning views of the surrounding Sapphire, Bitterroot, and Anaconda Pintler mountain ranges. Five rustic cabins offer a serene and relaxing getaway. For more information on how to rent one of the lookouts or cabins, visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot or call (406) 363-7100.

Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverTheBitterroot and www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF.


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