

## **Ravalli County Commissioners Office**

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**From:** Lubke, Joni M -FS <jmlubke@fs.fed.us>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 2, 2015 10:37 AM  
**Subject:** Bitterroot NF News Release - Forest Releases Decision on Darby Lumber Lands Project  
**Attachments:** DarbyLL Project Final DN-FONS\_IPressRelease\_070215.docx

### **Forest Releases Decision on Darby Lumber Lands Project**

Hamilton, Montana (July 2, 2015) – The Bitterroot National Forest has released the Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) for the Darby Lumber Lands Watershed Improvement and Travel Management Project. The project encompasses approximately 28,758 acres in the South Fork Sleeping Child and Rye Creek drainages in the Sapphire Mountains east of Darby.

The project is designed to improve watershed and stream health while also creating a sustainable motorized access system and loop-based motorized routes. Several sites with substantial aspen regeneration would also be thinned to reduce competition and promote long-term aspen stands for wildlife habitat. The purpose of the project is to:

- Reduce chronic sediment from the road system and return land to a productive status by using various treatments on roads
- Address the immediate and long-term access needs within the project area
- Improve recreation access and forest diversity

The project area had extensive road systems built decades ago for timber management. Many roads on acquired Darby Lumber Company sections were built without water resources in mind and are negatively impacting local watersheds by chronically elevating sediment levels. There are approximately 275 miles of roads and 15 miles of single-track trail within the project area. About 66 miles of road are proposed for decommissioning, and about 55 miles are proposed for storage. The project includes an overall reduction of about 5 miles of routes open to motorized access, when all proposed road and trail activities are considered. Most of the roads proposed for decommissioning and storage treatments are currently closed to motorized access.

Existing closed roads are also proposed for opening to OHVs < 50" in width, along with construction of connector trails to create recreational loop routes.

The DN/FONSI and EA are available online at [www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=36615](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=36615). The documents are also available for review at the Supervisor's Office in Hamilton and Darby Ranger District. For more information contact Ed Snook at (406) 363-7103 or [esnook@fs.fed.us](mailto:esnook@fs.fed.us). Stay in touch with the Bitterroot National Forest through [www.facebook.com/DiscoverTheBitterroot](https://www.facebook.com/DiscoverTheBitterroot) and [www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF](https://www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF).