

Ravalli County Commissioners Office

From: McKay, Tod G -FS <tgmckay@fs.fed.us>
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 11:18 AM
Subject: News Release: Forest Welcomes Visitors for 4th of July
Attachments: July 4th 2015.docx

Forest Welcomes Visitors for 4th of July

Hamilton, Montana (June 29, 2015) – 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 National Forests.** Please leave them at home. Violations are punishable by a fine of \$500 or more. Anyone who starts a wildfire can be held liable for suppression costs which can be substantial.
- **All 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 *Recreation/Cabins and Camping* sections.
- **Never leave a campfire unattended** and make sure your coals are cool to the touch before you leave. Forecasts are for an extremely hot and dry 4th of July and visitors need to be fire safe. Fire danger on the Forest was recently moved to High as fire potential indicators are at their highest levels in a decade.
- **Be prepared for changing weather conditions** including the potential for afternoon thunderstorms.
- **Be cautious around flowing waters** and especially at creek crossings.
- **Expect heavier traffic than normal on forest roads and trails** over the holiday. Drive defensively and notify the Forest Service of any downed trees or road damage so repairs can be made.
- **Pack it In–Pack it Out** is the best practice for all of your garbage.

Please be aware that at this time, drinking water is not available within the Lake Como Recreation Area (including the Lower Como Campground) due to ongoing water system repairs. Please plan accordingly and bring your own drinking water. Thank you for your patience as we work to fix the problem. Contact the Darby Ranger District for updates and more information. There is also no potable water available this summer at Blodgett Campground and Warm Springs Campground.

The gate at Lost Horse Road #429 on the Darby Ranger District is open. Schumaker Campground is also open.

The Magruder Road Corridor between Darby, MT and Elk City, ID is open. 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.

A reminder for those heading to Lake Como, you will need a recreation pass for parking. Cost of the 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 and Angler's Roost, Lone Pine, Town Pump South, Bob Ward's, and Riverside in Hamilton, and on-site at the recreation area. Day use fees and camping fees are charged at Lake Como from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend.

Local hiking and camping books, maps, animal and plant guides and Forest souvenirs are available at the *Discover the Bitterroot* store in the lobby of the Forest Supervisor's office at 1801 N. First Street in Hamilton.

Have a safe and happy 4th of July holiday!

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

Bitterroot National Forest – District Offices:

Sula Ranger District, (406) 821-3201

West Fork Ranger District, (406) 821-3269

Darby Ranger District, (406) 821-3913

Stevensville Ranger District, (406) 777-5461

Supervisor's Office, (406) 363-7100

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