

Glenda Wiles

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Sent: Thursday, July 2, 2015 12:38 PM
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Cc: King, Julie K -FS; Ward, Michael P -FS; Mayn, Cole M -FS; Lubke, Joni M -FS; McKay, Tod G -FS
Subject: Decision signed for Darby Lumber Lands Project
Attachments: DarbyLLProject DN_FONSI_PressRelease_070215.pdf

You have expressed prior interest in the Darby Lumber Lands Watershed Improvement and Travel Management Project. Forest Supervisor Julie King signed the Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact today. This Decision Notice, the Environmental Assessment and additional documentation is posted to the Bitterroot National Forest web site at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/bitterroot/landmanagement/projects>. The July 2, 2015 press release is attached.

Implementation of the watershed improvement work is likely to start the week of July 6th, with additional activity starting mid-July in various locations within the project boundary.

No start date for OHV route implementation has been set at this time, but planning and coordination efforts will begin. Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control erosion on the proposed OHV connectors and associated road segments will need to be implemented before opening the routes to the public.

Trail 104 segments added in this project are already in place and will be officially open with this signing of the document. These segments will be added to the Forest Visitor Map at the next opportunity, and the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) when it is finalized through the on-going Travel Management Planning Project.

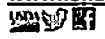
Thanks to those that have provided input to this project. For more information you can contact me or Forest Supervisor Julie King at jkking@fs.fed.us or (406) 363-7121.



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News Release

Media Contact: (406) 363-7122
Tod McKay

Forest Releases Decision on 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. 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. Stay in touch with the Bitterroot National Forest through www.facebook.com/DiscoverTheBitterroot and www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF.