

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** McKay, Tod G -FS <tgmkay@fs.fed.us>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2017 10:27 AM  
**Subject:** News Release: Meadow Vapor Project Analysis and Draft Decision Released  
**Attachments:** Meadow Vapor DN-FONSI.docx

### **Meadow Vapor Project Analysis and Draft Decision Released**

Hamilton, Montana (February 2, 2017) – Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Julie King has completed the environmental analysis for the Meadow Vapor fuels reduction and watershed improvement project. The analysis and draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) are available for public review and objection. The project proposes thinning approximately 3,200 acres of overstocked National Forest lands east of Sula, surrounding the Springer Memorial and Bonanza communities in the upper East Fork of the Bitterroot River.

The project includes commercial timber harvests, non-commercial thinning, slash piling, and prescribed burning. Objectives include:

- Reduce hazardous fuels and lower crown fire hazards within the Wildland Urban Interface.
- Improve forest resilience to natural disturbances such as fire, insects, and disease.
- Manage timber to provide forest products, jobs and income to local communities.
- Improve watershed conditions and fisheries habitat.
- Implement motorized recreation opportunities.

The Meadow Vapor project area is approximately 11,100 acres and includes numerous drainages which flow into the East Fork of the Bitterroot River including Meadow Creek, Vapor Creek, Needle Creek, Lick Creek, Reynolds Creek, and Tepee Creek.

The Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan identified the area as a 'high priority' for fuels reduction within the Wildland Urban Interface. Over the past 10-years the Bitterroot National Forest has completed numerous fuels reduction projects in a large portion of these 'high priority areas'.

The East Fork drainage includes ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, and Douglas-fir stands. In many locations, there are dense pockets of dead and dying trees due to insect mortality as well as severe western spruce budworm damage.

The proposal responds to past requests from residents of the East Fork area to remove hazardous fuels near their homes and help protect their community from the devastating effects of a high intensity wildfire.

The project would provide nearly 5 million board feet of timber (1,000 truckloads) to Montana sawmills.

The project also proposes to construct two new OHV (vehicles less than 50 inches in width) connector trails that were included in the recent Travel Planning Record of Decision to meet recreation needs in the area. It also proposes road improvements, and decommissioning and storage of routes to improve watershed conditions by reducing sediment sources.

The EA and draft DN/FONSI are available online at [www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=42988](http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=42988). They are also available for review at the Darby Ranger District and the Forest Supervisor's Office in Hamilton.

The draft decision is subject to public objection under Code of Federal Regulations §218. Objections may only be filed by those who previously submitted comments on the project. All objections must be submitted to the Forest Service by March 20, 2017.

Objections may be delivered or mailed to: USDA Forest Service, Northern Region, ATTN: Objection Reviewing Officer, Federal Building 26 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, MT 59804. Electronic objections may be submitted to: [appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us). Faxed objections may be submitted to (406) 329-3411. Please specify "Meadow Vapor Project Objection" in the subject line.

For additional information contact Eric Winthers, District Ranger, Darby/Sula Ranger District at (406) 821-3913.

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**Tod McKay**  
**Public Affairs Officer**

**Forest Service**  
Bitterroot National Forest

p: 406-363-7122

c: 406-531-1130

[tgmckay@fs.fed.us](mailto:tgmckay@fs.fed.us)

1801 N. First

Hamilton, MT 59840

[www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot](http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot)



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