

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** McKay, Tod G -FS <tgmkay@fs.fed.us>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 10, 2017 9:48 AM  
**Subject:** News Release: Settlement Agreement Reached on Westside Project  
**Attachments:** Westside Project - settlement agreement.docx

### Settlement Agreement Reached on Westside Project

Hamilton, Montana (March 10, 2017) – Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Julie King announced today that a settlement agreement has been reached on the Westside Collaborative Vegetation Management Project. The agreement allows the forest to move forward on plans to thin over 2,300 acres of overstocked National Forest System (NFS) lands southwest of Hamilton.

“We are pleased to announce today’s settlement that will allow us to move forward on this important fuels reduction project,” said Supervisor King. “This area has been identified as a ‘high priority’ for treatment in our Wildfire Protection Plan. The sooner we get started, the better our chances are of reducing the possibility of another high-intensity, devastating wildfire like we experienced last summer.”

Several units of the project were burned in the Roaring Lion Fire which charred 8,700 acres and burned 16 homes on July 31.

The project will thin nearly five miles of National Forest lands that border private property between Roaring Lion and Lost Horse creeks in the Bitterroot Mountains.

Proposed treatments include commercial timber harvests, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning to improve forest health. Work could begin soon on the non-commercial thinning units. The commercial logging won’t begin until later this fall or winter. The project will provide nearly 6.5 million board feet of timber to Montana sawmills.

As part of today’s settlement, the Forest Service has agreed to move the location of a new road farther away from the plaintiffs (*Fred Rohrbach & Bitterroot LLC*) property. In exchange, Rohrbach will grant the agency a temporary road permit to access project areas through his property using an existing road along his northern boundary. The easement will allow the Forest Service to expedite the removal of timber and treatment in these areas.

Over the past 10-years, the Bitterroot National Forest has completed numerous fuels reduction projects in a large portion of ‘high priority areas’ in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Since 2007, it has treated more than 30,000 acres of National Forest lands that border private property or are near homes.

For more information or questions concerning the project, please contact Eric Winthers, Darby/Sula District Ranger at (406) 821-3913. Stay in touch with us through [www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF](https://www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF) and [www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF](https://www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF).

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