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From: McKay, Tod G -FS <tgmkay@fs.fed.us>
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Annual Climbing Closure in Mill Creek Canyon

Hamilton, Montana (March 29, 2017) – Now that spring has arrived and warmer weather is just around the corner, the Stevensville Ranger District is reminding rock climbers of the annual closure of several routes, beginning this year on April 1st to prevent disturbance to known raptor nesting sites. On the north side of Mill Creek, the closure will be the same as last year and includes the “Pie for Strength” climbing area. Closure maps and information will be posted at area trailheads and on the Bitterroot National Forest website.

Wildlife Biologists plan to monitor the area periodically over the next few months to determine the presence or absence of birds using the nests. If the nests are not active, the restrictions will be lifted.

Forest Service personnel are also planning additional climbing area visits later this spring to assess current conditions and monitor the area for compliance. All findings from the monitoring trips will be posted on the Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot. Click on *Recreation* and *Climbing*.

In the meantime, forest officials want to remind climbers of their responsibility to regulate use and self-police their activities by following the “Leave No Trace” and “Pack it In, Pack it Out” principles. The “No Bolting” moratorium remains in place for the lower sport climbing area (North Rim) of Mill Creek. This prohibits the installation of any new fixed anchors (bolts) and expansion of any of the current bolted routes. Replacement of existing bolts for safety reasons is acceptable.

All climbers are encouraged to pick up a copy of the free “Leave No Trace Climbing” education and outreach brochure featuring simple climbing tips and recommendations. Brochures are available at all Bitterroot National Forest offices and at trailhead bulletin boards.

For more information contact the Stevensville Ranger District at (406) 777-5461. Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF and www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF.

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