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Subject: News Release: 2017 Mushroom Permits Available
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2017 Mushroom Permits Available

Hamilton, Montana (April 11, 2017) – The Bitterroot National Forest is currently issuing personal use mushroom permits for the 2017 season. Morel mushrooms are expected to appear later this spring. The Forest will only be issuing personal use permits this year -- commercial mushroom harvest permits will not be issued.

Mushroom seasons vary depending on local weather conditions and elevations but generally last from May through September. Personal use permits are free and available at all Bitterroot National Forest offices. You are not allowed to sell any of the mushrooms collected under a free permit, they are for personal use only. Mushrooms must be cut in half lengthwise at the time of harvesting. Free use harvesters have a 5 gallon per day (approximately 2 grocery bags) and 20 gallon per season limit.

The permits allow mushroom harvesting only on the Bitterroot National Forest. All harvesting is limited to hand picking – no heavy equipment will be allowed. Motorized travel is restricted to open roads and trails only and parking along many forest roads is extremely limited. Parked vehicles should not block traffic or impede fire or emergency vehicles.

Forest officials remind the public that the permit does not allow them to be on private property and they are responsible to know where harvesting is allowed. Private property surrounds these recently burned areas and trespassing on private lands warrants criminal prosecution. Much of the Roaring Lion Fire area is open to day-use only, no overnight occupancy from 10pm to 6am. There is also no water or services available at trailheads and 'Pack it in, pack it out' garbage.

Harvesters should also exercise caution and be alert to hazards associated with recreating in burned areas. These hazards include falling snags or trees, rolling rocks and debris and flash flooding/mud flows in areas without vegetation. There are also numerous snags over the trails that forest crews will clear later this spring.

The bridge leading over Roaring Lion Creek was also damaged in the fire and is scheduled to be replaced later this year. Forest users should use caution when crossing the creek and be aware that the crossing may become impassable due to high water from snowmelt or flood events.

Finally, harvesters should use caution while driving on Forest Service roads. Many are not plowed during winter months and there is still snow at higher elevations. Roads and trails at lower elevations are experiencing snowmelt during the day and the resulting runoff freezes at night, creating sheets of ice that are dangerous to negotiate. Melting snow can also create soft roadbeds which when driven on can cause severe damage to forest roads. Please avoid creating ruts and driving on soft roadbeds until they have had time to drain and harden.

The Bitterroot National Forest will be active in enforcing mushroom permit rules as well as the rules and regulations that protect resources. An increased law enforcement presence at campgrounds and heavy use harvest areas will help the Forest manage potential impacts.

Harvesters are encouraged to pick-up their free *2017 Mushroom Guide* featuring more tips and recommendations along with a detailed map at all Forest Service offices.

For more information, contact the Darby/Sula Ranger District at (406) 821-3913. Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF and www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF.

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