

## Chris Taggart

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**From:** Glenda Wiles on behalf of Ravalli County Commissioners Office  
**Sent:** Friday, September 15, 2017 2:22 PM  
**To:** Chris Taggart  
**Subject:** FW: News Release: Forest Seeks Comments on Project  
**Attachments:** Darby Lumber Lands 2 - Scoping.docx

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SFP 15 2017

Ravalli County Planning Dept.

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**From:** McKay, Tod G -FS [mailto:tgmkay@fs.fed.us]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 14, 2017 12:10 PM  
**Subject:** News Release: Forest Seeks Comments on Project

### Forest Seeks Comments on Project

Hamilton, Montana (September 14, 2017) – The Bitterroot National Forest is inviting the public to review and make comments on a proposed vegetation management, fuels reduction, and transportation system project in the Sapphire Mountains east of Darby. The Darby Lumber Lands (Phase 2) Project encompasses approximately 27,453 acres in the Rye Creek, Little Sleeping Child Creek, Harlan Creek, Roan Gulch, Burke Gulch and Robbins Gulch drainages on the Darby/Sula Ranger District.

Objectives of the project include:

- Improve forest resilience to natural disturbances (fire, insects, and disease) and restore historic structure in dry pine stands.
- Manage timber to provide forest products, jobs and income to local communities.
- Design and implement a suitable transportation system for long-term land management that is responsive to public interest and reduces adverse environmental effects.
- Improve recreation access by creating new OHV connector trails.

The project is a continuation of the Darby Lumber Lands watershed improvement project in 2015. Proposed treatments include commercial timber harvest, non-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning to improve forest health. The project will provide more than 5 million board feet of timber to Montana sawmills.

The Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan identified the area as a 'high priority' for fuels reduction within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

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 WUI. Since 2007, the forest has treated more than 30,000 acres of overstocked National Forest lands that border private property or are near homes.

The project also includes road improvements, construction, decommissioning, and storage of routes. Most of the roads proposed for decommissioning are already closed to motorized use.

The project area has extensive road systems that were built decades ago by Darby Lumber Co. for timber management. Many of the roads have not been maintained for 25 years and were built without water resources in mind, negatively impacting local watersheds by chronically elevating sediment levels.

Montana DEQ has listed two streams in the project area, Rye Creek & North Fork Rye Creek, as water quality impaired.

The project will create two new OHV connector trails to improve the recreational experience in the upper little Sleeping Child/Laird Gulch area. Darby Lumber Lands (Phase 1) created the new 'Darby Trails' system comprised of nearly 50 miles of motorized routes on the forest open to motorcycle and ATV travel.

To learn more about Darby Lumber Lands - Phase 2 and to view maps visit [www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot](http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot). Click on 'NEPA Projects'. Printed copies are also available for review at the Hamilton Supervisor's Office and the Darby Ranger District office.

Public comments are due by October 13, 2017.

Submit comments to the Responsible Official: Eric Winthers, District Ranger, by one of the following methods; mail: PO Box 388, Darby, MT 59829. Fax: (406) 821-4264, or email: [comments-northern-bitterroot-darby@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-bitterroot-darby@fs.fed.us). Comments should include: 1) name, address, phone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of project on which the comments are being submitted; and 3) substantive comments including specific facts and supporting information for the District Ranger to consider.

Only individuals or entities who submit timely and specific written comments about the proposed project during the public comment period will be eligible to file an objection.

For more information or questions concerning the project, please contact Eric Winthers, Darby/Sula District Ranger at (406) 821-3913 or Ed Snook, Forest Hydrologist at (406) 363-7103.

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

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**Bitterroot National Forest**

1801 N. First

Hamilton, MT 59840

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# News Release

Media Contact: (406) 363-7122

Tod McKay

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