

Chris Taggart

From: Glenda Wiles on behalf of Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Sent: Monday, September 18, 2017 2:35 PM
To: Chris Taggart
Subject: FW: News Release: Forest Seeks Comments on Fuels Reduction Project
Attachments: Canyon Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction.docx

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SEP 18 2017

Ravalli County Planning Dept.

From: McKay, Tod G -FS [mailto:tgmkay@fs.fed.us]
Sent: Monday, September 18, 2017 12:55 PM
Subject: News Release: Forest Seeks Comments on Fuels Reduction Project

Forest Seeks Comments on Fuels Reduction Project

Hamilton, Montana (September 18, 2017) – The Bitterroot National Forest is inviting the public to review and make comments on a proposed thinning project in the Bitterroot Mountains west of Hamilton. The Canyon Creek Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project proposes thinning approximately 255 acres of overstocked National Forest lands between Canyon Creek Trailhead and Barley Creek drainage on the Darby Ranger District.

Objectives of the project include:

- Reduce the likelihood of crown fires within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) by reducing the amount of fuels available to burn.
- Provide for improved firefighter safety in the event of a wildfire
- Improve winter range for elk and mule deer

Proposed treatments include non-commercial thinning, hand piling, and prescribed burning to improve forest health. The project is designed to reduce the potential severity, size, and adverse impacts of future wildfires. By removing hazardous fuels, you increase the likelihood of low-intensity fires that burn on the forest floor as opposed to high intensity fires burning in the tree crowns at high severity.

The Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan identified the area as a 'high priority' for fuels reduction.

Over the past 10 years, the Bitterroot National Forest has completed numerous fuels reduction projects in a large portion of 'high priority areas'. Since 2007, the forest has treated more than 30,000 acres of overstocked National Forest lands that border private property near homes.

The project will compliment hundreds of acres of thinning currently underway by private landowners in the area through a program administered by Bitter Root Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D). It provides up to a 75% cost-share to pay for fuels reduction work on private lands in Ravalli County.

90 neighbors signed and delivered a petition back in April encouraging the Forest Service to move forward on a thinning project near their homes. They also organized a community meeting to learn more about fire prevention and ways to protect their homes and property.

“There are a lot of simple things people can do that can make a big difference,” said Byron Bonney, RC&D Community Forester. “Keeping gutters clean and clearing off pine needles from the roof. Moving the stack of firewood off the porch. Getting rid of flammable plants next to your home.”

“It’s not a matter of if someplace is going to burn here in the Bitterroot,” Bonney said. “It’s a matter of when.”

To learn more about the Canyon Creek Fuels Reduction Project and how to provide comments, visit www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot. Click on ‘NEPA Projects’. Printed copies are also available for review at the Supervisor’s Office in Hamilton 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. 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 Jacquie Parks, Fuels Specialist at (406) 821-4268.

Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF and www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF.

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Bitterroot National Forest

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Web: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot>

News Release

Media Contact: (406) 363-7122

Tod McKay

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