

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOREST SERVICE PROPOSES REVISIONS TO DISABLED HUNTER POLICY

Missoula, MT – Acting Regional Forester Kathleen McAllister today proposed revisions to a Forest Service directive providing disabled hunters access to roads normally closed to the public. The draft proposal to ease current restrictions on companion hunters and administrative reporting requirements is now available for public comment. McAllister would like public comments on the proposal to be submitted prior to August 13, 2001. This proposal was developed in response to public comments and concerns regarding this program.

Under current policy, district rangers in the Northern Region of the Forest Service (Montana, Northern Idaho, and portions of North and South Dakota) may provide accommodations for disabled hunters prior to hunting season each year. Rangers may voluntarily designate access to closed roads based on guidelines that address the agency's responsibilities for resource care and protection. The disabled hunter may be issued a permit to access roads normally closed to the public and may receive other accommodations to assist them while hunting. The companion to the disabled hunter is permitted to access restricted national forest areas but is not currently allowed to hunt.

The draft proposal would allow the companion hunter to hunt, provided the companion meets and follows all state, federal, and local regulations. The companion hunter must also be named on the Forest Service permit issued to the disabled hunter.

To ease reporting requirements, district rangers hosting the program would no longer need to submit annual reports to the Northern Region. Instead, national forests would keep a file to document participation in the disabled hunter program.

To obtain a copy of the draft directive or ask questions about the revisions, call John Favro (406) 329-3150 or Larry Blocker (406) 329-3576. Comments, issues or concerns may be sent to John Favro, Northern Regional Office, P.O. Box 7669, Missoula, MT 59807 or jfavro@fs.fed.us.