
Gallatin National Forest News Release



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Forest Service Releases Expanded Social & Economic Analysis for Travel Planning

Forest Supervisor Becki Heath announced today that copies of the expanded social and economic analysis for travel management planning in the Gallatin National Forest are now available for review. The analysis is available on the Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin (click on Travel Planning), or a hard copy can be obtained at any Gallatin National Forest office.

“After we rolled out the Draft Environmental Impact Statement earlier this year, we heard from some of the public and members of Congress that they’d like to see a more in-depth social and economic analysis done,” indicated Becki Heath. “We have now completed the expanded analysis, and it is ready for public review and comment. Comments about the analysis, along with comments about the travel planning draft environmental impact statement, need to be submitted by August 1,” added Heath.

The expanded analysis uses data from the 2003 National Visitor Use Monitoring Study and the US Dept. of Commerce Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis. It focuses on three counties: Gallatin, Park, and Sweet Grass Counties. These counties have the communities which are most influenced by management of the Gallatin National Forest.

The analysis indicates that the population and economies of the three counties are growing and that recreation use on the Forest is increasing along with the population growth. Some activities, such as hiking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, and OHVing, are growing faster than others. The analysis also indicates that recreation activities have their largest effect on the retail trade and services sectors of the economy, and these are the sectors that are the largest and fastest growing.

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Page 2 - Forest Service Releases Expanded Social & Economic Analysis for Travel Planning

While recreation activity on the Gallatin National Forest is important to the local economy, it represents only a small part of the economy for the three counties. According to Heath, “Our analysis concludes that the economic activities related to all recreation visitation to the Forest account for less than 2% of the total employment and labor income in the three-county area.”

Heath further added, “We know that not all communities are equally affected by recreation activities that take place on the National Forest. For example, we know that snowmobiling has a relatively greater economic effect on West Yellowstone and Cooke City than on other communities. Our preferred alternative allows for the most snowmobile opportunities in Cooke City and West Yellowstone within our decision criteria. We will continue to work with these ‘gateway’ communities as we move toward a decision.”

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