



Bitterroot, Flathead and Lolo National Forests

www.fs.fed.us/r1/wmpz

Media Release

January 22, 2007

Contacts: Ken Hotchkiss, Bitterroot NF, 406-363-7187
Denise Germann, Flathead NF, 406-758-5252
Sharon Sweeney, Lolo NF, 406-329-1024

Content Analysis Completed for Western Montana Forest Plans

The Bitterroot, Flathead and Lolo National Forests (Western Montana Planning Zone) have completed an analysis of public comments received on their proposed land management plans. The forests received nearly 2,000 individual letters from members of the public, interest groups and other government entities. Forest Service staff considered more than 6,000 specific comments since many letters included comments on more than one topic. These comments were summarized into approximately 700 statements of public concern and are available at www.fs.fed.us/r1/wmpz.

The statements of public concern are focused into several broad topic areas:

- Access,
- Roadless Lands,
- Recommended Wilderness,
- Recreation,
- Resource Protection,
- Vegetation Management,
- Lolo Peak/Carlton Ridge Recreation Use, and
- Plan Components and Supporting Documentation.

The public comments are being reviewed and considered by each respective forest leadership team, including forest supervisors, district rangers and staff officers, as well as forest resource leaders and planning team members in the development of the final plans.

Numerous public meetings and community-based working groups, as well as input from Forest Service employees, led to the development of the proposed plans last year. The required 90-day comment period for the proposed plans was extended an additional 30 days to September 7, 2006. The content analysis report is a synthesis of the many comments received during this comment period.

Final plans for each forest are anticipated to be released in late spring. The public will have 30 days after the release of these plans to file written objections. Objections will be resolved by the Northern Regional Forester. A decision on the plans will be made by each respective forest supervisor after the objection process.

The three forests have been working together as the Western Montana Planning Zone since 2003. The forests share key issues, resources, customers and interested public. The existing Flathead and Lolo Forest Plans were approved in 1986 and the Bitterroot Forest Plan was approved in 1987. Each plan proposes general guidance for on-the-ground projects and activities on each forest.

For more information about the proposed land management plans for the Bitterroot, Flathead and Lolo National Forests, please visit www.fs.fed.us/r1/wmpz.

-END-