



# NEWS RELEASE

United States  
Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service

Lolo National Forest  
Building 24, Fort Missoula  
Missoula, Montana 59804

March 24, 2009

Contact: Andy Kulla  
(406) 329-3962

## **BLUE MOUNTAIN TRAILHEAD EXPANSION TO BEGIN SOON**

MISSOULA, MT -- The Lolo National Forest will begin an expansion project at the main Blue Mountain Trailhead on March 30, 2009. The trailhead expansion, approved in May 2004, will increase parking capacity, provide equestrian facilities and separate hiker and mountain biker parking from horse trailer parking. The entire trailhead will be closed from April 27 to May 15 during the final phase of the expansion.

The expansion was made necessary by growth in the Missoula Valley and subsequent use at this popular trailhead, according to Missoula Ranger District officials.

“The growth in Missoula has exceeded the capacity of this trailhead. As a result, parking and traffic can get kind of crazy on busy days,” said Andy Kulla, Missoula District Resource Staff Officer. With the expansion, hiker and mountain biker parking capacity will be increased by organizing the existing parking area, and an area south of the current parking lot will be developed for equestrians. “This will relieve a lot of the parking congestion and reduce conflicts when things get busy,” added Kulla.

The expansion is intended to accommodate the next two decades of growth in the valley, according to Kulla. There will be 44 automobile parking spots and room for 15 horse trailers. The horse trailhead will be designated for equestrian parking only, the same as the horse trailhead across town at the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area. Landscaping, earthen mounds and fencing are also planned to make the trailhead more organized and visually aesthetic. The Missoula Backcountry Horsemen will be helping with some of the improvements at the horse trailhead.

Construction of the new equestrian parking will begin on March 30, 2009 and continue to about May 15. Work on the existing parking area will begin approximately April 27 and run to approximately May 22. **To provide for public safety, the entire trailhead will be closed from approximately April 27 to May 15.**

If all goes well, the new and improved trailhead should be open again approximately May 16, Kulla said. “We apologize for the inconvenience, we’re trying to compress the closure as much as we can and when we reopen, it will be a much nicer facility,” he added. During the work, Blue Mountain recreationists are asked to avoid the trailhead area and hike, bike or ride in other nearby areas -- such as the northern Blue Mountain area, O’Brien Creek, Pattee Canyon Recreation Area, or the Rattlesnake Recreation Area.

For additional information, contact the Missoula Ranger District at (406) 329-3814.

###