



# NEWS RELEASE

## Lolo National Forest

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United States  
Department of Agriculture

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

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**Contact: Boyd Hartwig 406 329-1024**

## Lolo Forest Releases Scoping Letter for Post-Burn Work

Missoula, MT. – The Lolo National Forest this week released a scoping letter seeking public comment on planned road management work in several large areas that burned on three ranger districts during the 2000 fire season. The project, titled Post-Burn Roads 2000, would improve big game security and achieve important watershed restoration work -- including improved fish habitat by reducing sediment from some un-surfaced dirt roads. The project would include removing or replacing under-sized culverts that have the potential for blowing out during high stream flows. The scope of the work has not been narrowly defined because the forest hopes to establish a Proposed Action from public comment solicited during the scoping period, which runs until April, 27, 2009.

The project intent is to complete needed restoration work while maintaining important public access for recreation. Specifically the project would:

- Reduce road maintenance costs and update forest road management records
- Reduce the risk of culvert failures and reduce sediment and erosion potential on identified roads
- Restore drainage connectivity, provide fish passage and improve wildlife security
- Meet Forest Plan objectives and the intent of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Water Quality Restoration Plan for the Ninemile Watershed

The Post-Burn project was litigated by several groups shortly after the Record of Decision was signed in 2002. A subsequent settlement agreement with the Sierra Club allowed some of the work to be completed before a 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals decision stopped implementation of the project. In July of last year the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals overturned its earlier decision on the Lolo Post-Burn project in the Lands Council V. McNair case. The Lolo National Forest has since reviewed the road restoration elements not completed under the original July 2002 Post-Burn project and determined that watershed restoration and resource protection needs still exist in the project areas. The project areas have been established by fire area and drainage.

The work as currently proposed would include the following:

- Placement of approximately 95.5 miles of un-needed road systems in long-term storage.
- Remove (decommission) approximately 55.25 miles of road that are no longer needed for resource management or fire suppression

The project also calls for some changes to the miles of road that are open seasonally and year-round. While the miles of road identified for decommissioning have been identified as no longer needed for resource management, the Lolo National Forest is seeking public comment regarding the whole proposal and is interested in specific concerns related to particular roads. Maps showing proposed changes to individual roads will be available at each of the Ranger Districts where the work is proposed – the Ninemile, Superior, and Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger Districts. Maps and the project Scoping Letter will also be available on the Lolo National Forest website at, <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo/projects/>

For more information please contact the Lolo National Forest Public Affairs Office, (406) 329-1024

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