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Marshall Woods Field Trips Scheduled for April 14, 18

Missoula, Montana (April 8, 2015) – The Lolo Restoration Committee and the Missoula Ranger District will lead two field trips in the Marshall Woods project area next week for those interested in seeing the on-site locations for proposed project work. The field trips will include descriptions of proposed project treatments for the various Alternatives, opportunities to ask questions of resource specialists and offer ideas and provide feedback on the project. Members of the Lolo Restoration and specialists with the Missoula Ranger District will both be on hand to discuss the intent of the project and resource needs in the project area.

The Marshall Woods project's Environmental Assessment (EA) is currently in the public comment period. A draft decision is expected this summer with a final decision and objection period expected late summer/early fall. Once the EA comment period closes specialists will begin analyzing and responding to the comments. Public comments are a vital part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and help refine and shape decisions by identifying substantive issues.

The Marshall Woods Restoration Project is a collaborative effort with the Lolo Restoration Committee that was originally presented to the public in 2008. The origin of the project included the need for fuel reduction, road and trail restoration and recreation improvements within the National Recreation Area in former industrial timber lands near the Woods Gulch area (also known as Section 31).

“The LRC and the Missoula District recognized the need and the value to do forest restoration and community-based fuel reduction in the Upper Rattlesnake and Marshall Canyon back in 2008, shortly after the Montana Forest Restoration Principles were created,” stated Jake Kreilick, Chairman of the LRC. “Despite some funding hurdles and some controversy pertaining to allowing logging up the main corridor of the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area, we think that Marshall Woods can still be a showcase project in Missoula's backyard,” Kreilick said.

The EA, which can viewed on-line at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mashallwoods, includes four alternatives: Alternative A is No Action but includes ongoing already approved actions and maintenance activities; Alternative B includes commercial tree harvest, log hauling, and improvements to roads and trails in the main Rattlesnake corridor, Woods Gulch and Marshall Canyon as well as small tree cutting and prescribed fire; Alternative C includes commercial tree harvest and log hauling and improvements to roads and trails in Marshall/Woods Gulch area only with small tree cutting and prescribed fire in the main corridor; and, Alternative D includes small tree cutting and prescribed fire only to treat forest fuels with no commercial tree harvest. Temporary roads constructed in Alternatives B and C would be “rolled up” and restored to a natural condition after they were used for project implementation.

All of the action alternatives include additional resource improvement activities such as road obliteration, conversion of old roads to trails, weed control, hand thinning and prescribed fire. Given the sensitivity of this area, an extensive collection of measures to reduce potential impacts was developed. Information about the project is posted at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/marshallwoods. Details on the two field trips will also be posted at that location once they are finalized. The April, 14 (5-8 p.m.) field trip will take place near the Main Rattlesnake Trailhead and the April 18 (1-5 p.m.) trip will take place adjacent to Marshall Canyon near the Woods Gulch (Section 31) portion of the project area.

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