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Opportunity to Comment on Canyon Lake Dam Access for Repair 2018

The Bitterroot National Forest has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) analyzing the effects of authorizing adequate access for Canyon Creek Irrigation District (CCID) to repair Canyon Lake Dam. Canyon Lake Dam is owned and operated by the CCID. The dam and reservoir are located within CCID's recognized easement in Section 27, Township 6 North, Range 22 West, P.M., in the upper Canyon Creek drainage, west of Hamilton, Montana. The easement is located within the boundaries of the Bitterroot National Forest and Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

The purpose of the proposed project is to authorize CCID adequate access to their high hazard dam to repair deficiencies. The repairs are necessary to protect downstream public health and safety, and store and release water for agricultural and domestic use. CCID's proposal is consistent with the purpose, terms and limits of their pre-Forest easement, authorized under the Acts of 1866 and 1891 and granted by the Secretary of the General Land Office, Department of Interior.

The Forest Service is proposing to authorize adequate access (approximately 32 round trip helicopter flights) to allow for the work to be done on Canyon Lake Dam, safely and effectively, starting as early as September 2019. Helicopter use is requested to transport bulky equipment, and heavy construction materials to the dam, necessary to accomplish the repair work within generally accepted industry standards. It is not safe or feasible to physically pack this equipment and heavy construction materials in with stock. Helicopter flights will be staged on private property east of Canyon Lake Dam and National Forest System lands. The majority of flights will be concentrated at the beginning and end of the project during mobilization and demobilization. The timeframe for the work at the dam is estimated to be 4 to 6 weeks.

The EA for the Canyon Lake Dam Access for Repair Project 2018 is available for review and comment. You can read the document on the Bitterroot National Forest website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=55165> or you may request a paper or CD version from the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Office. Additional information regarding this action can be obtained from the ID Team Leader, Terri Anderson, at (406) 363-7100.

How to Comment and Timeframe

Specific written comments (§218.2) on the proposed project will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of this notice in the Ravalli Republic. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period. *At this time, the Responsible Official does not anticipate providing an additional opportunity to submit written comments other than this scoping and comment period.*

The proposed project is subject to the Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process (36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B). Only individuals or entities (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) who submit timely and specific written comments (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) about this proposed project or activity will be eligible to file an objection. Other eligibility requirements are defined by 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(3) and include name, postal address, title of the project, and signature or other verification of identity upon request and the identity of the individual or entity who authored the comments. Individual members of an entity must submit their own individual comments in order to have eligibility to object as an individual. A timely submission will be determined as outlined in 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(4).

Comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider (36 CFR 218.2).

Submit comments to the Responsible Official: Kurt Steele, Forest Supervisor, Bitterroot National Forest, Canyon Lake Dam Access Project, 1801 N. First Street, Hamilton, MT 59840-3114. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00- 4:30, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays (FAX- 406-363-7159). Electronic comments must be submitted by E-mail to: comments-northern-bitterroot@fs.fed.us (Please put "Comments - Canyon Lake Dam Access Project" in the subject line, for which you are submitting comments. An automated response should confirm your electronic comment has been received).

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. For objection eligibility, each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments must either sign the comment or verify identity upon request. Names and contact information (including addresses and e-mail addresses) submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

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RR #20557228 December 7, 2018