

# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region**



**Date:** February 7, 2002  
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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Missoula, Mont. – An agreement allowing emergency recovery activities to proceed on the Bitterroot National Forest was announced today by Kathy McAllister, Deputy Regional Forester for the USDA Forest Service’s Northern Region.

“I want to compliment everyone involved in the mediation process for their dedication to reaching a workable agreement,” McAllister said. “All along we have felt that restoring the resources and communities of the Bitterroot was the primary concern. We are extremely satisfied that restoration activities will proceed.”

According to McAllister, the agreement allows 19 restoration projects – approximately 14,700 acres -- to begin immediately. The agreement also identifies a list of 19 other projects – approximately 29,300 acres -- that will not be implemented under the Bitterroot burned area recovery record of decision and withdraws all pending appeals. “Bitterroot recovery projects that will not be implemented under the agreement may be considered later, following new National Environmental Policy Act evaluation,” McAllister stated.

The mediation began February 5, 2002, ordered by District Judge Donald Molloy. Working late into Tuesday and Wednesday night, Forest Service officials, Plaintiffs in the litigation over the Bitterroot Burned Area Recovery Record of Decision, and friends of the court finally signed the agreement on Thursday afternoon. McAllister expressed thanks to Judge Molloy for convening the mediation sessions; to Chief Judge Michael Hogan of Oregon, who tirelessly mediated between the groups; to U.S. Attorney Bill Mercer and his staff for their unique commitment to achieving a positive outcome; and to the mediation participants.

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A copy of the settlement agreement is attached.

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth and Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor Rodd Richardson will be available for media questions at 3:00 pm at the Northern Region Headquarters in Missoula. Phone in at 406-329-2480 and at the beep enter 2580.