



File Code: 1010/1950/7710

Date: January 16, 2013

Dear Interested Party,

Thank you for your continued interest in the Helena National Forest's Blackfoot travel planning efforts. We are pleased to let you know that the Blackfoot Travel Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which includes a Programmatic Plan Amendment to Standard 4a of the Helena National Forest Plan, has been prepared for this project. There will be two separate decisions for these items; one for the travel plan portion of the EIS and the other for the programmatic plan amendment. The DEIS will soon be available for review at the Lincoln Ranger District, 1569 Highway 200, Lincoln, MT 59639 and the Helena National Forest Supervisor's Office at 2880 Skyway Drive in Helena or via the Helena National Forest webpage at <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=30899>. A copy will also be available at the Helena and Lincoln local public libraries. I invite you to review and comment.

At this time we are in transition to the new Planning Rule (36 CFR 219), which uses a Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process (also known as an objection process) rather than an appeal process (36 CFR 219, Subpart B). We were unable to alert you at the time of scoping on the Blackfoot Travel Plan that we would be using the objection process for the programmatic plan amendment because the Planning Rule had not yet been finalized. However, through this letter we are notifying the public we will be using the objection process for the programmatic plan amendment. To be eligible to use the objection process for the programmatic plan amendment you must submit substantive formal comments related to the programmatic plan amendment during the 90 day comment period on the Draft EIS (36 CFR 219.53(a)). The 90 day comment period will begin when a notice of availability of the Draft EIS is published in the Federal Register, which will happen in a few weeks. After the Federal Register notice is published we will also publish a legal notice in Independent Record. Open houses are scheduled for February 11 and 28 at the Lincoln Ranger District Office from 2 p.m. until 8 p.m. where Forest staff will be on hand to meet with you, answer questions and discuss the project and process.

In addition to accepting comments on the programmatic plan amendment, we will also be accepting comments on the Blackfoot Travel Plan during a 45 day comment period. Please note: the 90-day and 45-comment periods will start at the same time and run concurrently for the first 45 days. Comments on the Blackfoot Travel Plan should clearly state your issues and concerns with the alternatives, the adequacy of the DEIS, or both. Comments are most helpful when they are focused and clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions. To have standing to appeal the Blackfoot Travel Plan EIS final decision, you must submit comments within this 45 days comment period, which starts the day after the publication of the notice of availability of the Draft EIS in the Federal Register (36 CFR 215.6(a)(ii)), which will happen in a few weeks. Comments will be accepted in any of the ways shown in the following table.



Type of comment	Instructions
Electronic	Email comments to comments-northern-helena-lincoln@fs.fed.us and include the words Blackfoot Travel Plan in the subject line. Acceptable formats include .doc, .docx .txt, .pdf, or .rtf only. You will receive confirmation that we received your email
Written	Fax comments to (406) 362-4253 Mail comments to: Helena National Forest, ATTN: Blackfoot Travel Plan, 2880 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT 59602
Hand-delivered	Deliver comments to Helena National Forest, Lincoln Ranger District, 1569 Hwy 200 Lincoln, MT or the Helena National Forest Supervisor's Office at 2880 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Please Note: If the proposed 36 CFR Part 218 objection process for projects becomes available in the near future, the Forest may elect to utilize it in place of the existing 215 appeal process, in which case, the public would be notified.

We expect the notice of availability to be published in the Federal Register on January 25, 2013. Please check the Federal Register at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/> for the exact publication date since this is the exclusive means for calculating the ending date of the comment period. If you plan on commenting, please do not rely on dates provided by any other source.

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, written comments received on this proposal, including names and addresses, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. You may submit your comments anonymously, but in that case will not have standing to appeal the final decision.

If you would like us to send you a printed copy or an electronic CD copy of the DEIS, please contact Jaime Tompkins at the Helena National Forest (406) 449-5201; copies will also be available at the Lincoln Ranger District office.

If you have questions about the draft environmental impact statement, maps, or how to comment, please call Amber Kamps, Lincoln District Ranger, at (406) 362-7002 or Jaime Tompkins, Project Liaison, Helena National Forest (406)449-5201.

Thank you for participating in the management of the Helena National Forest.

Sincerely,



KEVIN T. RIORDAN
Forest Supervisor