
File Code: 2720
Date: June 30, 2022

Dear local outfitting and guiding community:

The recent rain on snow event in the surrounding area caused devastating flooding on and around the Custer Gallatin National Forest (Forest) and the communities of Red Lodge, Nye, Cooke City, Gardiner, Emigrant, Livingston, Big Timber, and many others. The immediate impacts felt to the Forest's partners, public, permittees, and neighbors is significant and is causing a substantial impact to livelihoods, homes, property, utilities, quality of life, and the local economy. The Forest is the gateway to Yellowstone National Park on the west, north, and east entrances. These national forest system lands serve a vital role in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and support jobs and opportunities for families, workers, tourists, and industry.

In response to this unprecedented flood event, the Forest immediately provided emergency support during the event itself. Since that time, we have been evaluating impacts to Forest infrastructure, initiating recovery actions, and meeting with partners and stakeholders. As part of that effort, the Forest has prioritized assessing impacts to outfitter and guide businesses in the local communities.

Forest-wide, there are approximately 175 Outfitter and Guides currently permitted to operate on the Custer Gallatin National Forest. ***About 80 of these are within the area impacted by the flood event; developing solutions with these partners is our first priority.*** We are working with current Forest Outfitter and Guide permit holders on an individual basis to understand flood impacts in order to determine how to adjust to provide services and support these businesses. If you are an existing priority permit holder with impacts from the flood event and have not been contacted by your permit administrator, please contact them to discuss your needs for this season.

Additionally, over the past two weeks, the Forest has also been working with federal and state partners (Yellowstone National Park (YNP) and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP)) to understand their outfitting community's needs. This collaboration, coupled with discussions with Forest outfitters, has helped us better understand needs of the broader affected outfitting community. Initial discussions have helped identify what types of uses, potential locations and duration of use we may be able to accommodate.

As a result of this collaboration, we have determined that we can provide some outfitting and guiding opportunities for specific uses in specific locations to provide some opportunities for displaced YNP and FWP outfitters.

The following outlines our approach, process, and types of opportunities we are able to support immediately through the use of an Emergency Determination process. It is important to note that this Emergency Determination does not affect current Forest permit holders.



Guidelines for Emergency Determination:

At this time we can only consider emergency accommodation for current FWP fishing and Federal (YNP or Bureau of Land Management (BLM)) permittees that are displaced by the flooding event.

What opportunities are available under an Emergency Determination:

- Temporary use only, July 1st, 2022 through Monday, September 5th, 2022 (Labor Day Weekend). This opportunity is solely to help local displaced guides due to the flood and will not be extended beyond this event.
- Generally low-risk, low-impact activities only.
 - Types of use that will be considered:
 - day use hiking, nature walks
 - day-use wade fishing
 - wildlife viewing
 - backpacking

What opportunities or areas are not available through an Emergency Determination:

- High risk activities including stock trips and river (boating) use. If you have been displaced and seek to offer these activities on the Forest, please contact the district permit administrator to discuss a temporary outfitting and guiding application. Opportunities for these types of uses will be limited.
- Additional use in Wilderness Areas (Absaroka Beartooth or Lee Metcalf) or the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area.
- Individual Ranger Districts have additional areas and trails that are not appropriate for additional temporary use due to crowding or resource impacts.

To be eligible for an Emergency Determination:

- Provide a copy of your current permit via email that clearly indicates your status and operating area (YNP, FWP, etc.).
- Identify in the email your proposed type of use and locations.

What to expect next:

- The permit administrator will review your current permit and proposed use and locations. We will provide a response or request further information as quickly as possible. If approved, you will receive an Emergency Determination letter that identifies what activities are authorized.
- To operate on the Custer Gallatin National Forest through September 5, 2022 a copy the Emergency Determination letter from the appropriate permit administrator will need to be kept on the outfitter and/or guide at all times.

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We invite you to join us for a virtual Question and Answer session on the Emergency Determination Process on Wednesday, July 6th from 10:00 am to 11:00 am Mountain Time. The link to join the meeting is in the email you received, or you may join by phone 1-202-650-0123, conference ID 234864518#.

Sincerely,

MARY C. ERICKSON
Forest Supervisor