



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **ADVOCATES FOR BITTERROOT RESORT URGE FOREST SERVICE TO FULLY CONSIDER RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITY OF ADDITIONAL SKIING IN REGION**

MISSOULA – As new forest plans are being developed on the Lolo, Bitterroot and Flathead National Forests, leaders of the proposed Bitterroot Resort endorse the Forest Service’s process of refinement and urge full consideration of expanded recreational and economic development opportunities in western Montana.

“We embrace the Forest Service’s inclusion of all members of the public in developing a comprehensive new plan for the Lolo, Bitterroot and Flathead National Forests,” said Tom Maclay, founder of Bitterroot Resort and owner of an approximately 3,000-acre ranch in the Bitterroot Valley near Missoula. “By carefully considering the vision of the forest as expressed by all those who work and play on it, the Forest Service will be demonstrating a sensitivity to its customers that will serve all of us for several decades to come.”

The Lolo National Forest is managing the process of revising management plans for the three forests. A public meeting re-engaging the process is scheduled Thursday night in Missoula.

Economic statistics generated by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana [[www.itrr.umt.edu](http://www.itrr.umt.edu)] demonstrate that few industries can match the benefits of tourism and recreation:

- \$2.62 billion in total industry output from non-resident sources alone
- 37,000 jobs and more than \$738 million in personal income supported by out-of-state recreation and tourism.
- Montana state and local governments received an estimated \$135 million in taxes attributable to non-resident traveler spending in 2003, the most current available data.

Bitterroot Resort officials today submitted comments to the record and will participate in each stage of the Forest Service’s revised planning process in an effort to continue to demonstrate the value of recreation and tourism to the Montana and Northwest economies.