

December 17th, 2018

Attn:

Rachel Feigley, Mid-Swan Project
Flathead National Forest (USFS)
Region 1 Office
24 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Re: Comments for Mid-Swan Landscape Restoration Project and wildland Urban Interface Project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. We appreciate the District and Forest efforts to engage state and local governments and Montana citizens throughout the analysis process. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Northwestern Land Office and Swan Unit are committed to continuing a positive working relationship with the District and Forest.

The DNRC supports this project. Its location is not only important for the national forest system lands within the project area, but also for the neighboring private landowners and the DNRC, which manages Trust Lands in the project area and has wildland fire protection responsibility on the private lands in the project area. Implementation of the proposed project will result in positive impacts on our public lands and across ownership boundaries.

The DNRC understands and appreciates the intent of a large landscape restoration project and are very interested and excited to see a project of this magnitude moving forward. In particular, we support your efforts to treat a significant amount of the wildland urban interface. Our comments reflect our desire to enhance the social and economic needs of our communities, maintain and enhance desired conditions on the ground, and maximize results from such a large planning effort.

We encourage you to consider:

- Forest Restoration and Industry Retention are key components of Montana's Forests in Focus Initiative 2.0 and we encourage you to make supplying timber to Montana mills a goal of the project rather than just a byproduct of the restoration work. We are confident making timber production a goal will have a positive impact on meeting the needs laid out in the Scoping Document. We encourage the interdisciplinary team and the decision maker to consider this and other factors that can increase the economic viability of the vegetation management portion of the project and still meet forest restoration goals.

- Partnering with the DNRC, through tools such as the Good Neighbor Authority, to achieve the goals of the project and reach cross boundary objectives. The DNRC looks forward to discussions on how we can help reach our common goals on this project.
- This project presents a tremendous opportunity to complete cross boundary work. Through our local partner Swan Valley Connections the DNRC has many grant opportunities for work on private and state lands within the project area using USFS State and Private Forestry funds. Implementation of the Mid-Swan Project should be coordinated with the DNRC and Swan Valley Connections to accomplish important work across ownerships.

Thank you for considering our comments. We appreciate your work in weighing the many interests involved and utilizing the best available science in project development. We look forward to continuing working alongside you for the benefit of Montana's communities, forests, wildlife, and watersheds.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nick Aschenwald', is positioned above the printed name.

Nick Aschenwald
Unit Manager
Swan River State Forest