

From: [FS-appeals-northern-regional-office](#)
To: [Troxel, Olga -FS](#); [Hutchinson, Cody R -FS](#)
Subject: FW: Darby Lumber Lands—Phase II Project Objection
Date: Monday, April 8, 2019 3:50:19 PM
Attachments: [DLL 2 Objection Comments, Van P. Keele, Karen Savory.docx](#)
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[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)



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From: Van Keele [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, April 7, 2019 10:52 AM
To: FS-appeals-northern-regional-office <appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us>
Cc: Karen And Van <skarenvan@hotmail.com>; vankeelee@gmail.com
Subject: Darby Lumber Lands—Phase II Project Objection

Hello,

This is our Objection. I (Van P. Keele) am the lead objector. I formally request an objection meeting with the Objection Reviewing Officer. Van P. Keele

Darby Lumber Lands—Phase 2 Project Objection
 Responsible Official: Supervisor Matt Anderson
 Darby/Sula Ranger District, Bitterroot National Forest

Issue 1

Road building into Units 10,3, and parts of 5 (specifically MA8b) is in violation of the Forest Plan. Temp roads proposed for construction into the above units do not access an adjacent MA and are therefore not allowed under the Forest Plan. Temp roads are in fact roads. Other types of road construction including TLM and Skid trails are likewise prohibited in MA8b. Temp roads, TLM, and constructed Skid trails are all listed as road construction in DLL2—Appendix A—Table A-1.

Darby Lumber Lands Phase 2 - Appendix A - Table A-1

Vegetation Management and Associated Road Construction				
Treatment Type	Acres		Road Type	Miles
Commercial Harvest (includes post-harvest prescribed fire)	1261		New Permanent	4.3
Prescribed Fire Only	57		Temporary	4.4
Total veg management	1318		Tracked Line Machine	1.2
			Constructed Skid Trail	0.6
			New Construction on Private Land	0.4
			Total Road Construction - All Types	10.9
			Total Road Construction - On USFS Lands	10.5

Also, these same activities are considered roads in the Gold-Butterfly DEIS. All of these types of road construction will leave their ground-disturbing effects on the landscape long after decommissioning. REMEDY: All planned road construction in MA8b that does not access adjacent MAs should be dropped to comply with the Forest Plan.

Issue 2

There is no stated Purpose and Need for this project that addresses, justifies, or directs commercial logging in MA8b with its distinct standards and objectives related to big-game and forage. On page 3, SILVI 001: “Stands proposed for harvest in MA8b do not meet the suitability of timber management as they have been withdrawn...unless timber harvest is permitted to help other resource management objectives related to wildlife according to the Bitterroot National Forest Plan.” And while there is a cursory reference in the Draft Decision Notice: “Harvest units in this MA [8b] will help protect or enhance the other multiple use values identified in the Forest Plan (forage)”, there is no explanation or justification in the project files under Silviculture or Wildlife where specialists connect how the proposed logging in MA8b units will optimize big-game forage production or winter range habitat. On page 19 of WILD 001 regarding timber harvest in MA8b: “Timber harvest and prescribed burning would improve winter range forage production.” To be clear, there is no effects analysis done or references cited to support how specifically timber harvest will improve winter range forage production. Prescribed fire is substantiated, timber harvest is not. Saying so without substantiation does not make it so. Nor is there any reference to other MA8b areas on the BNF that underwent similar treatment with measurement indicators utilized to demonstrate achieved goal of improving big-game forage

production.

REMEDY: Use prescribed fire only to treat MA8b areas to achieve goals of improving forage and winter range habitat. This is a reasonable course of action that is discussed on page 10 of the Fuel file.

Issue 3

According to the supporting file (SILVI 001, page 18) the project's MA8b sections "could be prescribed burned without commercial harvest since most of the area is predominantly within desired basal area." There should be no commercial logging. Fire risk is low and stands are stocked at normal historic levels.

REMEDY: No commercial harvest in MA8b. Use prescribed fire only.

Issue 4

There is a Purpose and Need that directs treatment to restoring dry pine stands, but this VRU [1] makes up only 3.9% of the 3000 ac analysis area (Table 3: VRU by Unit)—page 7, SILVI 001. If this relatively small acreage has its own Purpose and Need then there should certainly be a separate Purpose and Need related to wildlife regarding MA8b timber harvest given the relatively large area involved.

Issue 5

All proposed new road construction will provide a vector for weed entry, proliferation, and establishment. This is especially pertinent in MA8b given its goals and objectives. Blue weed is becoming a problem of epidemic proportions along Rye Creek on private lands to the north. Other weeds known in the project area such as knapweed, cheatgrass, Canada thistle, houndstongue, and rush skeletonweed are out-competing natives and degrading big-game forage, all the more deleterious in MA8b. The FS does not guarantee long term weed control, and areas in the recent DLL-Phase 1 project, which had houndstongue infestations, were not adequately treated and still remain.

REMEDY: Prescribe burn only in MA8b. Avoid road construction.

Issue 6

There are significant economic questions surrounding this project given the PNV is \$(-) 885,503. There is proposed road building going into MA8b units like 10 and 3 which are not only prohibited under the Forest Plan, but which cost taxpayer money and are accessing areas within the desirable BA and have low volume-which according to the Forest Plan is "nonchargeable." How does this make economic sense? How does building a road (Unit 8) down into and along the creek in Roan Gulch, just to further build road segments on private land to reach Units 10 and 3 make economic sense? And at the cost of potential sediment in the creek? These road segments were not analyzed to justify entry into MA8b. Were the private road segments analyzed for impacts such as sediment? These roads may benefit the permittee but how will it benefit the taxpayer or forest user who won't have access? The spec road in Unit 8 does not fulfill the project's Purpose and Need #1.

REMEDY: If you build the spec road in Unit 8 do not go down to the creek. Reshape the Unit. Consider making it a temp road. Drop the proposed road segments out onto private land in the N/NW corner that are planned to access Units 10 and 3.

Issue 7

Was analysis performed on impacts of building paralleling temp and spec roads in Units 7/8? This proposed road building will create significant disturbance.

REMEDY: Fully disclose effects analysis and reconsider extent and type of road construction in these units.

Issue 8

On page 22 SILVI 001, Table 7, Purpose and Need “Improve Forest Health,” it refers to BA measure of less than 80 in P-pine dominance types and that acres meeting this Purpose and Need is 1275. This is wrong and flawed, as P-pine dominant (VRU1) acreage in the analysis area is only a small 3.9%, or 117 acres. Mixed conifer VRU2 is the dominant stand type. The Purpose and Need does not refer to mixed conifers, only dry pine stands. By far VRU2 is the dominant stand type.

REMEDY: Reserve treatment to VRU1 (P-pine dominant) as referenced specifically in the Purpose and Need.

Issue 9

In the FONSI (#3): “Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as...ecological critical areas.” We have very little MA8b on the Forest. It has unique characteristics and is ecologically important for big-game. It is to be managed for wildlife with very specific prohibitions on timber harvest and road building. A significant portion of the commercial logging proposed occurs in MA8b (349 acres out of 1295). No explicit explanation for commercial harvest in MA8b can be found in the EA or Silvi or wildlife files.

REMEDY: Maintain the ecological integrity of MA8b in the project area by dropping commercial logging in relevant units. Otherwise, there is a significant impact.

Issue 10

In the FONSI (#6): “The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.” “This is not a precedent-setting decision.”

I disagree. Allowing road building in MA8b that does not access adjacent MAs is prohibited under our Forest Plan. This is setting a precedent that may have significant future effects. When and where specifically has this occurred elsewhere on the BNF?

REMEDY: Do not set this precedent of road building in MA8b that’s contrary to the Forest Plan.

Issue 11

Serial use of EHE site-specific Forest Plan amendment. Project after project our Forest Plan is amended for EHE. To any reasonable person this serial use has become abuse.

REMEDY: Decommission enough roads in the project area to comply with the Forest Plan and avoid amending it.

Issue 12

If the FS has not done a formal consultation with FWS on grizzlies, lynx, and wolverine then please do so.

The above issues were brought up in our comments on the Draft EA. We do not believe they were adequately addressed in the Draft Decision. Notably lacking was any explanation for road building in MA8b that’s contrary to the Forest Plan; also deficiencies in the Purpose and Need to address wildlife (related to harvest in MA8b) and directing treatment in the dominant mixed conifer VRU2 —as opposed to dry pine stands (VRU1) as referenced specifically in the Purpose and Need.

Van P. Keele
Karen Savory

