



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 8

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JAN 22 2020

Ref: 8ORA-N

Ken Coffin, District Ranger
Beartooth Ranger District
6811 U.S. Highway 212
Red Lodge, Montana 59068

Dear Mr. Coffin:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 reviewed the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Greater Red Lodge Vegetation and Habitat Management Project (Greater Red Lodge) Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Custer Gallatin National Forest (CEQ No. 20190305) pursuant to our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Draft SEIS provides additional information and analysis to the April 2015 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The Draft SEIS re-analyzes the effects of the project on Canada lynx and lynx critical habitat based on new information and updated habitat mapping. Updated information for grizzly bear and wolverine is also included. Additionally, the Draft SEIS corrects an error identified in the Carbon County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan/Community Wildfire Protection Plan Wildland Urban Interface boundary. The project is located in Carbon County, Montana in the Beartooth District of Custer Gallatin National Forest.

This proposed action supplements portions of the 2015 Final EIS, and purpose and need and alternatives have not changed. The purpose and need of the project is to reduce hazardous fuels, maintain and/or improve resiliency of forest vegetation and grasslands, enhance aspen habitat, and improve water quality. The preferred alternative, Alternative 2/3 Modified, will treat 1807 acres using a combination of commercial and non-commercial treatment methods. The EPA letters dated November 10, 2014 and May 18, 2015 included recommendations for the Final EIS that are applicable to this action. The 2015 Records of Decision (RODs) (withdrawn) incorporated numerous Best Management Practices (BMPs) and criteria to address water quality impacts. We encourage the USFS to carry forward those BMPs and criteria into the ROD for this action, and to assure implementation and monitoring of these measures to minimize water quality impacts.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the review of the Draft SEIS. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at (303) 312-6704, or Shannon Snyder of my staff at (303) 312-6335 or snyder.shannon@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Philip S. Strobel
Chief, NEPA Branch
Office of the Regional Administrator