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January 25, 2020

Bitterroot National Forest
Attn: Forest Plan Amendment
1801 N. First Street
Hamilton, MT 59840

Re: File Code 1950
Comments on Forest Plan Amendment

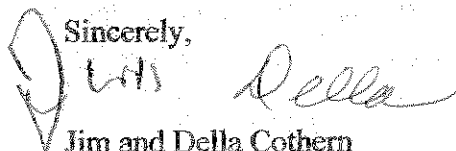
We the undersigned, being husband wife, wish to thank the Forest Service for their letter of December 18th, 2019, requesting comments regarding the proposed Forest Plan Amendment. We have been owners of Ravalli County land located on the north shore of Trapper Creek for nearly four decades. The area appealed to us from the beginning of our first visit to this area in 1981 when we purchased 20.07 acres of land. One element of appeal was the wildlife that we observed which we consider an important element of any environment.

We have degrees from University of Iowa., Della in nursing and Jim in economics and a law degree. In June of 1998 we both completed the Forest Stewardship workshop and made an approved plan specific to our property. That August Della attended the Riparian Stewardship Workshop in Missoula. Since that time we have used our learnings from those classes and on site visits to guide us in taking care of our property. Following the fires of 2000 we were the first landowners in Ravalli County to participate in the DNRC program of thinning the forest as well as the fire retardant program. That program also provided cost sharing between the owner and the government entity. Our land had many noxious weeds, including Knapweed, and we have pulled, spot sprayed, paid for the upper 15 acres to have commercial weed control, as well as using insects to rid our property of weeds. Neither of us are hunters, but we respect the use of Federal land for recreational hunting.

Through our lives here we have occasionally asked the Forest Service for help on problems and cannot recall an occasion of disappointment. This leads us to believe the program in question would be appropriate at the present time since it has not been substantially updated for 32 years and there have been newer research projects. There have always been problems to wildlife from disease, predatory imbalances, and poaching. We now have the new and tremendous danger of climate change, exhibited by increasingly dangerous wildfires, which will test even the best agency in environmental matters.

Therefore, we strongly favor the implementation of the above discussed program. We believe the Forest Service is the best entity to lead in this monumental endeavor.

Sincerely,


Jim and Della Cothern