



October 1, 2020

Jamie Tripp and Molly Ryan
District Rangers
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
420 Barrett St.
Dillon, MT 59725

I am writing to comment on the Selway-Saginaw Vegetation Management Project. Sun Mountain Lumber agrees with the purpose and need statement for this project. We strongly support managing lands suitable for timber production to meet forest goals for growth and yield of saw timber. We appreciate the recognition of recovering economic value of forest products and the importance of local economies.

A primary goal of the project should be to maximize receipts from commercial timber harvest on suitable lands and lands suitable for other purposes. The money generated can provide restoration activities and projects with values to other resources. These benefits can only be realized if the Beaverhead-Deerlodge sells their timber products through sales that are economically viable. This success depends on both the volume and type of timber products sold and the requirements of removal. Allowing ground-based yarding on slopes exceeding 35% with approval by a soil scientist is a good example of flexibility that can make timber sales more economical. Minimize limited operating periods and hard dates in contracts in favor of letting purchasers operations continue as long as conditions allow. Under the Scenery section there is a requirement that residual unburned slash would be scattered to reduce discernibility of the burn circle, would this be a purchaser responsibility?

Sun Mountain agrees with the assessment of current stand conditions and the proposed treatments. Changing stand density and age classes will help address the threat of Mountain Pine Beetle and reduce the intensity of wildfire. The future need for timber products depends on the types of treatments implemented by the Forest Service today. We encourage pre-commercial thinning as early as practical to positively affect the long-term sustainability of the timber resources on Forest Service managed land as well as its influence on wildland fire suppression. Only 11% of the project area is proposed for timber harvest activity. We would like to see more acres considered for commercial treatment to increase the economic gain to local economies.

The project has many opportunities to benefit the forest through road improvements, timber harvest, reducing erosion and improving wildlife habitat. We hope to work with you and your agency to benefit all parties involved and meet objectives on the ground.

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Respectfully,

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