



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

970.453.3402 ph | 970.453.3535 f 208 East Lincoln Ave. | PO Box 68
www.SummitCountyCO.gov Breckenridge, CO 80424

April 20, 2021

Scott Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor
c/o Brett C. Crary, Forester, Silviculturist
900 Grand Ave.
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

Dear Mr. Fitzwilliams:

Thank you for your February 17, 2021 invitation to comment on an aspen management project designed to improve the health of aspen forests and wildlife habitat on national forest system lands within the White River National Forest (WRNF). Based on our review of the information in the notice we would like to express our support of the Aspen enhancement efforts in the White River Aspen Management Project.

The proposed project highlights the important ecological and economic contribution Aspen make across the region. The note emphasizing aspen water retention properties and how this species plays an important role to help slow the spread of wildfire is of high value. Summit County managers are concerned that wildfire suppression policies have created over dense forests that are slowly converting to mostly conifer trees. High altitude species diversity in the WRNF seems to be on the decline, which can be hazardous. We support forest disturbance through mechanized tree removal and prescribed fire to increase forest resiliency and contribute to greater forest health. Prescription areas greater than 40 acres in size will certainly be visible and may cause public concern. Thankfully, we believe the greater public is aware of the wildfire issue and the challenges it brings. Promoting ecosystem health and encouraging the resurgence of healthy aspen stands is in our collective best interest. Post-treatment monitoring in prescribed stands will be essential to understand the effectiveness of the proposed treatment options and ensure adequate regeneration and recruitment of aspen and other species. Conversion of forested stands to shrub land or savannah is a real possibility, especially on drier site seral stands.

We support the management activities described in the Notice of Proposed Action, to improve natural Aspen regeneration through suckering, increase Aspen resiliency to disturbance agents, to improve habitat, and increase the distribution of aspen on National Forest Service lands.

We would like to express our appreciation for the opportunity to comment on the proposed project. If you have any questions or wish to respond to this letter please contact Dan Schroder, Summit County CSU Extension Director, in the Summit County Community Development Division, at (970) 389-5756 or Dan.Schroder@SummitCountyCO.gov.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Elisabeth Lawrence