



F.H. STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER COMPANY

Lumber Manufacturers

Box 1429 Columbia Falls, MT 59912
Phone (406) 892-7005 Fax (406) 892-1612

www.stoltzelumber.com

April 22, 2021

Objection Reviewing Officer
USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
26 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804

RE: Bug Creek - Objection

F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber would like to file an objection to the Bug Creek Project. F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber has been involved in forest management around Flathead, Lake, and Lincoln counties since 1912. Currently, Stoltze owns a sawmill in Columbia Falls, MT which supports over 120 employees directly and contributes over \$30 million dollars to our local economy. Stoltze also owns and manages just over 38,500 acres for timber and multiple uses. Our lands are certified under the American Tree Farm System and our mill maintains an SFI fiber sourcing certificate based on our commitment to purchasing sustainably and responsibly managed timber.

The Bug Creek Project is located on Crane Mountain within the Swan Lake Ranger District and within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The Project is also located within close vicinity of our mill making it very attractive for fiber sourcing. Stoltze wants to see this project proceed according to the Draft Decision Notice and Alternative B. Based on the Project's location and Stoltze's knowledge of the current forest condition within the proposed Project area we feel we must file an objection supporting the rationale for exceeding the maximum opening size. Exceeding the maximum opening size will help support the purposes of the Bug Creek Project:

- Reduce fire behavior near communities within the wildland-urban interface to facilitate safer, more effective wildland fire operations.
- Improve the diversity and resilience of forest vegetative communities and associated wildlife habitat.

The current forest structure within the Project area is a mature closed canopy stand that is in decline. Over-story timber is infected with Douglas-fir Bark Beetle, various Mistletoes, root rots, and fungus. The proposed treatments of regeneration harvest in units: 37, 51, 115, and 117 which all exceed the maximum opening (40 acres) are being implemented in response to the forests declining condition and trying to create a desired future condition as defined within the 2018 Flathead Forest Plan. Stoltze has intimate knowledge of the Forest and its declining condition as one of our current Forester's helped the Forest Service setup and mark the harvest units on the Bug Creek project.

Stoltze files this objection and requests that the Forest Service maintain units: 37, 51, 115, and 117 in the Bug Creek Project as proposed. As professional Forester's we believe these units which exceed the maximum opening will provide a fire break, create understory vegetation necessary for ungulate health, while also retaining the best specimens of desired timber species for regenerating a fire adapted forest. Stoltze feels that if these elements of the Bug Creek Project are removed, the Project will no longer meet it's intent and purpose to its fullest capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to file an objection on the Bug Creek Project.
Sincerely,

Cameron Wohlschlegel
Forester
F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company
P.O. Box 1429
Columbia Falls, MT 59912



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