



VIA Email: appeals-northern-regional-office@usda.gov

May 26, 2021

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

Dear Reviewing Officer:

This letter is on behalf of Sun Mountain Lumber. We would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of support for the **Pintler Face Project** during the objection period. We are invested and supportive of the development of this project and we were happy to provide Draft EA comments dated December 11, 2017.

Sun Mountain Lumber is a family owned sawmill that provides direct employment for approximately 170 mill and logging jobs in Deer Lodge, MT. In addition to the potential of this Pintler Face Project providing raw material for our operations, we view these types of projects as creating a relationship in which our operations assist the Wisdom Ranger District, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in achieving their goals and objectives on the ground.

We understand that the Draft Selected Alternative would achieve the purpose and need of the project allowing the Forest to accomplish Forest Plan goals and objectives for managing forest timber, vegetation, watershed, and aquatic and terrestrial wildlife resources. We support the different vegetation treatments over the approximately 11,224 acres within the project area and applaud the recovery of economic values. Recovery of these values may in turn allow the Forest to achieve those goals that provide ecological benefits without economic returns.

Regeneration and Salvage Harvest are an excellent prescription for the forest types prevalent in the Pintler Face Project area. It is our opinion that a mosaic of age classes would most closely replicate stands created through historic fire regimes and should be employed even when greater than 40 acres. Science has shown that a mosaic of age and size classes creates lodgepole pine stands that are not only more resilient to forest insects and disease, but reduce fire hazard.

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This project would provide infrastructure benefits in the form of much needed maintenance and bringing roads up to the standards of *Montana's Best Management Practices*. We support the responsible reduction in road densities and associated sedimentation. Specifically when these densities are caused by clandestine or poorly planned roads.

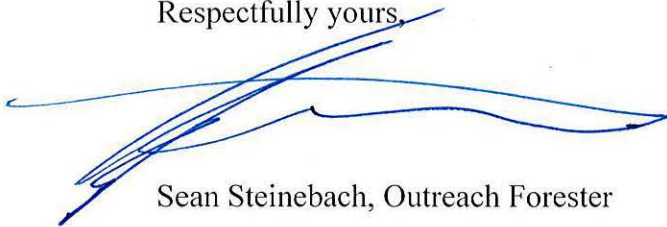
In our December 11, 2017 letter we expressed concern over the loss of acres available for pre-commercial thinning. That acreage has gone down again from 1,565 to approximately 1,532 over seven units. Science shows that reducing competition promotes better growth and healthier trees which in turn would provide better future opportunities and sustainability of our resources.

We believe that this project will have benefits for the adjacent landowners, area wood products facilities and other infrastructure. Additionally, larger project areas such as this Pintler Face Project could provide greater balance of ecological benefits and benefits to local infrastructure while providing economy of scale.

Lastly, whenever possible please carefully consider timing of operation restrictions and allow flexibility for operators.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I look forward to more projects.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sean Steinebach', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sean Steinebach, Outreach Forester