

Reference: Bitterroot Front, Stevensville Ranger District, Bitterroot National Forest–US Forest Service, Department of Agriculture
May 20th, 2022

Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor’s Office
including Darby/Sula Ranger, Stevensville Ranger, Sula Work Center, West Fork Ranger District
1801 North 1st Street
Hamilton, MT 59840

Dear Heroes of our great Bitterroot Valley,

As we stand at the precipice of wildfire season approaching, cross-sectoral collaboration is unceasingly imperative to public/private natural resource management. Practices of managing land includes forests and grasslands, natural resources, recreation management, fire management, sustainability and climate, invasive species, private land, urban forests, and international cooperation. Participation is not only an agency concern, but also involves public engagement, along with outreach and education to work with local landowners affected by incidents such as catastrophic wildfires, subsequent damage to private property, and the potential loss of life. As funding becomes available to work with those affected on the fringes of the intersecting interfaces of public versus private property, the cruxes of fire mitigation and management practices calls for three key components: resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities, and safe and effective responses to wildfires (National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy).

Cross-boundary projects such as the *Bitterroot Front* help aggregate treatments across ownerships and accelerate forest management through prioritization based on input and perspective for local interest, resources, and economic conditions. Reductions in forest wildfire fuels include the following principal tools: mechanical thinning, which simultaneously stimulates healthy ecosystems, prescribed burning, which followed by periodic prescription helps restore natural fire regime and reduces understory wildfire fuel loads, and managed wildfires, which encompasses practices for trees species/forest types identification, old growth, fuel density, and protection of backcountry infrastructure. With these formalities in place, areas with reduced fuel loads can give firefighters a chance to stop or slow a wildfire’s progress therefore decreasing the likelihood of potential hazards to human and wildlife environments.

Based upon the evidence brought forth with data showing Ravalli County having one of the highest fire hazard rates in the state of Montana, this issue we face as residents should be a non-partisan decision which crosses jurisdictional boundaries as it affects all of us living here in the Bitterroot Valley. **I recommend approval and am in favor of the project** and will strive to work with local, state, and federal government agencies, along with the citizenry which includes residents, visitors, and tourist alike to improve our circumstantial vitality because quality of life matters. As we exist together, this also includes the legacy we leave for future inhabitants and for generations to come. What will be our story when we are long gone and how will we bear our tradition and heritage?

Sincerely, 

Jacob Roy Cummings
Ravalli County Planner – 2020 to July, 2021 and Dec. 2021 to current, Hamilton, MT
Ravalli County Natural Resource Collaborative Member – 2022, Hamilton, MT

Vice President of Daly Mansion Historic Preservation Trust – 2021 to current, Hamilton, MT

Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning, 2020 – University of Central Florida, Orlando
(Concentration: Environmental, Health, and Transportation Planning)

Bachelor of Science in Public Administration, 2014 – University of Central Florida, Orlando
(Concentration: Emergency Management & Homeland Security and Urban & Regional Planning)

Evaluator and Reviewer for Local Mitigation Strategy & Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
for accreditation, 2015, Orange County Office of Emergency Management, Orlando, FL

Osceola County Fire & Rescue Advisory Board, 2015-2016, Kissimmee, FL

Soldier Fire Marshall and Combat Lifesaver, U.S. Army Combat Veteran for Operation Iraqi Freedom &
New Dawn, 2007-2012, International