

[REDACTED]
Stevensville, MT 59870

May 14, 2022

Bitterroot N F

This letter is in response to your scoping document on the Bitterroot Front Project dated 4/20/22.

The scoping document lacks detail on exactly what is being proposed, where it is proposed, or when it is proposed. This lack of information makes it impossible to make really effective comments.

Two and one-half years ago the BNF held several meetings asking people to come and describe what management activities they wanted to see done on the Bitterroot Front. The scoping document poorly reflects the numerous and varied concerns and desires expressed at those meetings.

For the past few decades the BNF has used fuel reduction as a cover for the logging program, and the scoping document appears to follow that pattern. I would suggest you issue a new scoping document that emphasizes ecological, wildlife, and recreation needs, along with the fire protection needs.

There are a few questions that need answers:

- 1 How much volume is available to log from a silvicultural standpoint?
- 2 What percentage of this volume is economical to access from existing roads?
- 3 In general, how far from private land do you need to reduce fuels in the WUI? ¼ mile, ½ mile, 1 mile?
- 4 How do you plan on maintaining the desired level of fuel reduction?
- 5 What areas of the Bitterroot Front are in greatest need for fuel reduction?

On page 9 of the scoping document it states that commercial harvest is an appropriate tool in MA 5. The Forest Plan does not appear to support this.

Attached is a copy of some specific information previously submitted.

Sincerely,



Kirk Thompson

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Stevensville, MT. 59870

November 11, 2019

Comments on the Bitterroot Front Project

The primary use of the Bitterroot NF, and especially the Front area, is recreation and scenery. Recreation is almost totally dependent on the road and trail system. Other issues of vital importance are protection of visual quality, protection from wildfire, restoring PP forests, protecting and increasing old growth, maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, and protecting water quality. The primary way the Bitterroot NF can promote community stability, provide jobs, and protect property values is to protect the Bitterroot Front.

General comments:

1. Keep roads, trails, and signs maintained!! If you do a poor job of this, you will not be trusted to do the much more complex job of forest management.
2. Do not use the limited road maintenance funds to subsidize timber sales.
3. Hikers and horse users want loop trails too, although they have not been as vocal about it as motor and bicycle users.
4. Work with the county to reduce fuels on private land and emphasize fire protection work around homes.
5. Reduce fuels in the WUI so that fire can be used in the future to maintain forest health and restore PP stands.
6. Do not build or use any road for timber haul without obtaining permanent public right of access. (even if only for non-motor use)

Specific comments:

The most critical road maintenance needs are

1. Restore the last 1.5 miles of the St Marys road and keep the entire road well maintained.
2. Restore and gravel the last 0.5 miles of the Bear Creek road.
3. Restore/gravel the Lost Horse overlook road.
4. Maintain the Lost Horse road – follow the forest plan requirements!
5. Gravel as necessary and maintain the Big Creek and Glen Lake roads.
6. Restore the Cow Creek road.

Other specific comments:

1. Improve the Sweathouse Creek Trailhead.
2. Reconstruct the Como – Lost Horse road 5621 (survey done about 1996).
3. Construct new loop trails for hiker/horse users in areas such as Lick Creek and Spoon/McCoy Creek areas.
4. Construct a trail from Ward Mountain trailhead to Coyote Coulee trail. The recent rejection of this proposal was based on incomplete and inadequate information.

I will volunteer to assist in trail planning, location, and construction of any new hiker/horse trails.

KIRK THOMPSON