



Date: November 07, 2022

Dear Objector:

This letter is in response to your objections filed on the Spotted Bear Mountain Environmental Assessment and Draft Decision Notice released by Scott Snelson, Spotted Bear District Ranger. I have been briefed on your objections and there has been a review of the project record. My review of your objection was conducted in accordance with the administrative review procedures found at 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

The regulations at 36 CFR 218.8 provide for a pre-decisional administrative review process in which the objector provides sufficient narrative description of the project, specific issues related to the project, and suggested remedies that would resolve the objections. In my review I considered issues related to the National Environmental Policy Act, Sensitive plants, wildlife, Threatened and Endangered Species, soils, climate change, grazing, roadless areas, roads, fire and fuels, vegetation management, and invasive plants.

OBJECTION RESOLUTION MEETING

I conducted a resolution meeting on Wednesday, October 5, 2022, attended by the following objectors:

- Matt Bishop of F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company
- Tom Partin of American Forest Resource Council
- Steve Kimball of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

We discussed issues related to the proposed action including active management, treatment in riparian zones, old growth management, climate change, and roads. I appreciated hearing participant's perspectives on this proposal.

RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

As specified at 36 CFR 218.11(b), this is my response to your objections to the Spotted Bear Mountain Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Decision Notice. I have found that the responsible official provided adequate analysis of the issues raised and provided acceptable documentation of compliance with applicable law, regulation, and policy.

As a result of my review of objections and the resolution meeting, I am instructing the responsible official to complete the following before signing the decision notice.

Silviculture:

- Clarify how adjacent potential vegetation types within treatment units comply with standards in the Flathead National Forest Land Management Plan for openings greater than 40 acres.



- Explain why live trees greater than or equal to 17 inches Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) are the threshold for retention of western larch and ponderosa pine in Design Criteria number 28 (EA page 78). Additionally, explain why the same DBH threshold does not apply to Douglas-fir.

CONCLUSION

Upon incorporation of these instructions, the responsible official may sign the Decision Notice for this project. My review constitutes the final administrative determination of the Department of Agriculture; no further review from any other Forest Service or Department of Agriculture official of my written response to your objection is available [36 CFR 218.11(b)(2)].

Sincerely,



Kurtis E. Steele
Forest Supervisor

cc: Scott Snelson, Michele Draggoo, Gary Blazejewski, Olga Troxel