

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Water Resources Division

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10 January 2022

Timothy Lahey, District Ranger
U.S. Forest Service – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
1820 Meadowlark
Butte, MT 59701

Subject: Support for Basin Creek – Butte Watershed Project #63295

Dear Mr. Lahey:

The purpose of this letter is to express the DNRC Dam Safety Program's support for the Butte Ranger District's proposed forest management activities in the Basin Creek – Butte Watershed Project. The project aims to reduce the risk of a severe wildfire in the watershed that contains Basin Creek Dams #1 and #2. These dams are a critical component of Butte's water supply system. A high-severity fire could destroy vegetation that normally absorbs rainwater and form a charred soil layer that blocks water absorption.

After an intense fire, the watershed is at increased risk of flash floods or mudflows. We have concerns about the performance of Basin Creek Dam #2 during a storm event. If a storm event raises the reservoir level, seepage around the outlet and through the foundation could increase and potentially lead to failure of the dam. Failure of Basin Creek #2 would have a direct impact on Basin Creek Dam #1, which also has deficiencies of concern. Failure of the lower dam would place many residences and businesses at risk.

We fully support these efforts to mitigate wildfire risk to Basin Creek Dams #1 and #2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Story".

Steve Story, PE, CFM
Water Operations Bureau Chief
Water Resources Division
sestory@mt.gov

CC: Jim Keenan, Chief Operator, City-County of Butte Silver Bow
Michele Lemieux, DNRC Dam Safety Program Supervisor
Brent Zundel, DNRC Bozeman/Helena Regional Engineer