

MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Commissioners

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January 10, 2023

Tim Lahey
Butte District Ranger
1820 Meadowlark
Butte, MT 59701

RE: Letter of Support for Basin Creek – Butte Watershed Project

Dear Mr. Lahey,

The Madison County Board of Commissioners fully supports the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) proposal to conduct forest management activities in the Basin Creek – Butte Watershed Project located south of Butte, Montana.

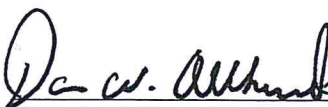
The Basin Creek Municipal Watershed is the primary (up to nearly 60%) source of drinking water for the Butte area, supporting nearly 35,000 people. The Basin Creek Treatment Plant was completed in 2017 at a cost of over \$30 million. The treatment plant ensures that EPA standards are met and has the secondary benefits of saving energy and reducing withdrawals from the Big Hole River. A major wildfire in the watershed could render the plant inoperable and Butte's most productive and economical water supply would likely be rendered unusable and full recovery could take a decade or more. If the Basin Creek Supply were unavailable for 10 years, the total estimated increase in power costs alone are estimated to up to \$4.3 million and the total costs associated with recovery could be much higher.

The project area boundary is about 15,178 acres in size. The proposed activities are needed to protect the municipal watershed by restoring and improving the characteristics of forest composition and structure to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects. These activities focus on treating approximately 2,424 acres of vegetation using silviculture treatments, with includes the removal of vegetation and prescribed fire.

We fully understand the need for this project and wholeheartedly support the proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Dan W. Allhands, Chairman
Board of Commissioners
Madison County


Ronald E. Nye


William A. Todd