

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Trust Lands Management Division • Southwestern Land Office • Missoula
1401 27th Ave., Missoula, MT 59804 Phone: (406) 542-4200 Fax: (406) 542-4285



GREG GIANFORTE, GOVERNOR

1539 ELEVENTH AVENUE

STATE OF MONTANA

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE: (406) 444-2074
FAX: (406) 444-2684

PO BOX 201601
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-1601

February 17, 2023

Daniel Pliley, District Ranger
West Fork District
6735 West Fork Road
Darby, MT 59829

Re: Montana Department of Resources and Conservation, Comments on the Proposed Action
for the Thunder Mountain Project

Dear Mr. Pliley:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed action for the Thunder Mountain Project. The proposal is to treat hazardous fuels on about 466 acres within the Alta- Thunder Mountain area. The proposed treatment areas are within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and are identified as Priority Areas for Focused Attention in the Montana Forest Action Plan due to high risk to wildfire impacts.

The Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) has fire protection interest this area and manages State Trust Lands in the vicinity. Our agencies share the common goals of reducing wildfire risk and improving forest health in Montana's forest landscapes.

DNRC supports the Purpose and Need for the project. There is a strong need to reduce the likelihood of crown fires within the WUI by altering fuels, provide for firefighter and public safety in the event of a wildfire by reducing potential fire intensity, and promote resiliency of forest stands to insect and disease impacts.

DNRC supports the proposed vegetation and fuels treatments including mastication, mechanical thinning, non-commercial thinning, piling and burning, and low intensity prescribed burning. These treatments will reduce ladder fuels, effectively reduce intensity of wildfire, and provide defensible space along the boundary with private lands. Post-treatment conditions will be safer for private landowners and firefighters. We urge you to consider ways to utilize non-saw log wood material from this project.

DNRC is committed to continuing our positive working relationship with the Bitterroot National Forest, specifically relating to landscape resiliency, wildfire response, community protection, and sustainable forest management. By working together, we can more effectively work towards an "all lands" approach to forest management and restoration, benefiting both agencies' missions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael O'Herron".

Mike O'Herron
Area Manager, Southwestern Land Office
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Cc: Thayer Jacques, Unit Forester, Stephen Kimball, Local Government Forest Advisor |