



ST. VRAIN AND LEFT HAND WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

1715 Iron Horse Drive, Suite 250 • Longmont, CO 80501-9757 • 303-772-4060 • www.svlhwcd.org

April 11, 2022

To: United States Forest Service

From: St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District

Re: **St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District St. Vrain Forest Health Project NEPA Comment**

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The St. Vrain and Left Hand Water Conservancy District (“District”) supports forest restoration work on national forest land in the St. Vrain Forest Health Project (“Project”) area because it aligns with District goals and objectives to protect, conserve, and maintain healthy water resources for District constituents and the environment. Furthermore, the Project will enhance the pre-fire mitigation treatment already being done by the District and the St. Vrain Forest Health Partnership.

The District commends the U.S Forest Service (“USFS”) team for a comprehensive Environmental Assessment (“EA”) founded in scientific literature and strong stakeholder engagement.

**Support**

The District supports several components of the EA. These include treatments proposed to address Project goals in the lower montane, shrubland, and shortgrass steppe. The District also fully supports a robust strategy to gather data to establish baseline environmental conditions, continuously monitor treatment areas, and inform adaptive management triggers. Specifically, the District supports data collection and monitoring for potential impacts to water resources, including patterns and rates of erosion; changes in stream morphology, water quality, bank stability, channel features, fish habitat, and water body greenlines; and invasive species encroachment.

**Areas of Concern**

The District has identified that the EA does not address considerations for water districts or their partners to manage fuels on USFS lands. The District has both funding and authority to work on non-District lands. Formalizing a partnership, similar to the “Shared Stewardship Agreement” recently achieved with the State of Colorado, could be a mutually beneficial opportunity for the USFS to increase capacity and achieve Project goals.

The District also requests the USFS conduct public education and outreach regarding legal use of roads, trails, campfires, and firearms on USFS lands. The District is particularly interested in education around negative impacts to water quality. The District is available to partner with the USFS on education and outreach.

The District is grateful for the USFS team’s dedication to developing this EA and the opportunity to provide these comments. The District looks forward to future opportunities to work with the USFS to implement this Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sean T. Cronin".

Sean T. Cronin

Executive Director