



TOWN of FRISCO

P.O. Box 4100 • Frisco, Colorado 80443

May 15, 2023

Adam Bianchi
District Ranger, Dillon Ranger District
c/o Kathleen Gray
680 Blue River Parkway
PO Box 620
Silverthorne, CO 80498-0620

Dear Mr. Bianchi,

Please accept this letter as a formal comment for the Frisco Backyard Fuels and Recreation Project and thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. The Town of Frisco supports the purpose and need as identified in the scoping notice and supports a wide analysis of proposed actions for the project with consideration of the comments below. It is acknowledged that we are not wildfire mitigation experts, but that we can represent how the proposed actions may align, or conflict, with other Town goals and values.

The Town is acutely aware of the elevated risk of wildfire to our community. As a signatory to the Summit County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and member of the Summit County Wildfire Council, we feel that the USFS and Town of Frisco have strong alignment in the commitment towards reducing the wildfire risk to Frisco and the surrounding Forest. We also want to strongly state our desire to balance proposed actions with the look and feel of the study area after treatment to support tourism and local enjoyment.

Comment 1: **Methods** – Fire risk is of the utmost importance but we also understand that leave trees and live vegetation should remain for forest health, scenic value, and wildlife habitat. We encourage exploration of a broad scope of treatment options along with clear-cutting and regardless of the expense or resources needed for the treatment type. We also feel that maintenance of the treated areas should be included to ensure long-term effectiveness of the mitigation efforts and forest health.

Comment 2: **Timing** – It is our community's desire to implement this proposed action as soon as practical. It is widely recognized that the wildfire environment is rapidly changing, and it is a matter of when, not if, we have a wildfire affecting our community.

Comment 3: Relationship to goals of **CWPP** – The Summit County CWPP has several goals that align with the proposed action for this project including “to identify and mitigate areas that are at particular risk from wildfire loss”, such as the Backyard area; and, to “develop plans to reduce potential loss of property, critical infrastructure, and valuable ecological resources, while protecting the safety of the public and firefighters.” The proposed action as described in the Notice of Proposed Action directly addresses these goals in a high priority area. However, the scale of the map shows large areas of treatment with broad treatment methods. Future analysis should evaluate the most appropriate treatment that balances fuel reduction with recreation, tourism, and local community goals. We feel that this project is critical in order to decrease wildfire risk to neighboring communities

and infrastructure, and will complement the wildfire mitigation work that has already taken place in the Ophir Mountain and Rainbow Lake areas.

Comment 4: Frisco Trails and Pathways Master Plan – Demand and use of the Backyard’s existing trail network has grown significantly over the past decade. The desire for trail maintenance and improvements has been a high priority of community members during the community outreach for both the 2017 and 2023 Trails and Pathways Master Plan. The Town is supportive of the efforts to formalize and improve well-loved, user-created trails. We respect Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s concerns regarding elk habitat and feel that several of the trails being proposed will help to keep users on designated routes in areas where there is already heavy use, and in places where the existing trail use may have already altered animal behavior. Due to the heavy use of the Rainbow Lake area and access trails, the Town is strongly in favor of restoration and naturalization for this area, the proposed enhancements to parking areas, and trail maintenance and improvements.

Comment 4: Cultural Resources – We recognize the importance of the historic features and feel that the fuels reduction efforts will offer resilience and protection for these features in line with the intent of the National Monument designation.

The Town would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project and express our general support. We look forward to reviewing the proposal as the project progresses. If you have any questions regarding these comments please direct them to:

Susan Lee
Town of Frisco
Planning Manager
970.668.2566
susanl@townoffrisco.com

Regards,

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Thomas C. Fisher, Town Manager
Town of Frisco