

Flathead County
Board of Commissioners
(406) 758-5503

Brad W. Abell
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September 19, 2023

USDA Forest Service
Gary Blazejewski
Flathead Fuel Break Project
P.O. Box 190340
Hungry Horse, MT 59919

Subj: Flathead Fuel Break Project - Support

Mr. Blazejewski,

Flathead County wholeheartedly endorses the Fuel Break Project, which aims to mitigate hazardous fuel conditions within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). This endeavor not only serves to diminish the intensity of wildfires, but also provides essential safeguarding for private property and structures.

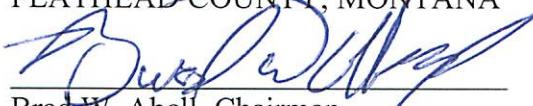
In tandem with the growing number of citizens establishing Home Ignition Zones (HIZ) around their residences and undertaking forest management on their lands to curtail fire intensity, it becomes increasingly imperative for government agencies to actively engage in land treatment efforts. While projects such as this one represents a promising initial stride, expeditious action, and the treatment of larger expanses of land are warranted. This isn't just a matter of wildfire prevention; it's also central to the overall health of our forests. The implementation of shaded fuel breaks, where smaller trees are selectively removed while larger ones are preserved, enhances the water and nutrient availability for the latter. Reflecting on history, the landscape in Flathead County once boasted large trees with minimal undergrowth, a result of frequent, low-intensity fires.

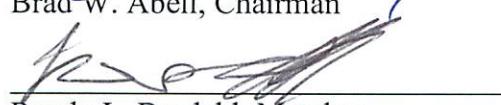
Addressing the wildland fire issue must shift to a comprehensive landscape-scale approach to put an end to the recurring cycle of uncontrollable wildfires. Collaboratively adopting a forest health perspective that focuses on preserving the larger trees, limiting understory growth, and fostering a mosaic pattern across the landscape featuring various age classes of trees and designated openings, including clear cuts, to facilitate grass and brush growth for wildlife, will be our most effective strategy in preventing large-scale wildland fires.

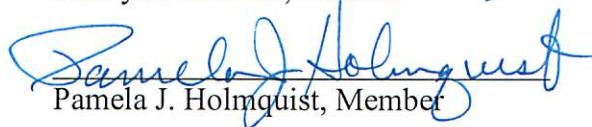
We strongly recommend that, in accordance with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021, section 40806, the areas of Good Creek, Ashley Lake, and Lion Hill be designated with a maximum width of 1000 feet for the Fuel Break Project. Flathead County stands firmly behind the Flathead Forest's mission to diminish wildland fire intensity within the WUI through the Flathead Fuel Break Project. Together, we can safeguard our community and our natural environment from the devastating impacts of wildfires.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FLATHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA


Brad W. Abell, Chairman


Randy L. Brodehl, Member


Pamela J. Holmquist, Member

