



File Code: 1570
Route To:

Date: June 6, 2023

Subject: South Plateau Reviewing Official Objection letter

To: Objectors

This letter is in response to objections filed on the South Plateau Landscape Area Treatment Project Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Decision Notice released by Jason Brey, Hebgen Lake District Ranger. I have read your objections and reviewed the project record. My review of your objections was conducted in accordance with the administrative review procedures found at 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW PROCESS

The regulations at 36 CFR 218 provide for a pre-decisional administrative review process in which the objector provides sufficient narrative description of the project, specific issues related to the project, and suggested remedies that would resolve the objections.

In my review of objections, I considered issues related to the National Environmental Policy Act, the recently revised Custer Gallatin National Forest plan (2022), the National Forest Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, wildlife, watershed, fisheries, vegetation management, noxious weeds, recreation, roadless areas, travel management, water quality, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, and carbon sequestration and climate change.

RESOLUTION OF OBJECTIONS

Objection regulations at 36 CFR 218.11(a) allow for parties to meet to discuss issues raised in objection and potential resolutions. I hosted an objection resolution meeting on June 1, 2023, attended by:

- Luke Fisher of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition
- Kerry White for Citizens for Balanced Use
- Andy Geissler of American Forest Resource Council
- Rebecca Ward

Although we did not reach agreement on remedies, I appreciated the thoughtful discussion. We will highlight additional information in the final analysis and decision on several of the key points that were discussed. I sincerely appreciated the time and engagement from those who were able to attend.



RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

As specified at 36 CFR 218.11(b), this letter is my response to your objections. After my review of the EA, draft Decision Notice, and project record, I find the responsible official provided an adequate analysis of issues raised and provided acceptable documentation showing compliance with applicable law, regulation, and policy. However, based on a thorough review of objections I am instructing the responsible official to complete the following.

Objection Review Instructions:

1. Disclose why all alternatives submitted by commenters were not analyzed in detail.
2. Clarify which version of the CEQ Regulations were applied to the analysis.
3. Address the cumulative effects of the Rendezvous Ski Area project for those resources that have overlapping effects.
4. Ensure a comparison of effects between no action and the proposed action is disclosed in the project record.
5. Disclose the existing condition of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail as a baseline for analysis.
6. Clarify the effects of unauthorized motorized use on National Forest System roads on affected wildlife.
7. Explain why you concluded that elk habitat is not limited in the project area.

CONCLUSION

Upon incorporation of these instructions, the responsible official may sign the decision notice for this project. My review constitutes the final administrative determination of the United States Department of Agriculture; no further review from any other Forest Service or United States Department of Agriculture official of my written response to your objection is available [36 CFR 218.11(b)(2)].

MARY C. ERICKSON
Forest Supervisor

cc: Jason Brey, Amanda Williams, Erin Fryer, Jennifer Woods, Olga Troxel