



F.H. STOLTZE LAND & LUMBER COMPANY

Lumber Manufacturers

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March 21, 2024

U.S. Forest Service, Libby Ranger District
Attn: Jennifer Runnels, Team Leader
12557 HWY 37
Libby, MT 59923

RE: Snowshoe Granite 1000 Roadside Fuelbreak Project

I would like to comment in support of the Snowshoe Granite 1000 Roadside Fuelbreak Project. As a Forester with F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber in Columbia Falls I believe it is imperative to play an active role in managing our forests. Just as important is providing a reliable source and supply of fiber for our local saw mills which provide jobs and contribute over \$300 million to our state and local economies.

This project would be an excellent use of the Fuel Break CE as allowed by the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Using this tool will allow the forest to increase the pace and scale of treatment as Chief Randy Moore has stated in high priority firesheds. In addition to being located in a high priority fireshed, the project is located within the WUI and would directly contribute to helping reduce fuels within close proximity of the private holdings in the area.

Aside from reducing surface fuels, the other goals of this project include improving forest health conditions. Active forest management has benefits that transcend trees themselves and is reflected in increased resilience to wildfire, other disturbances while also creating and enhancing wildlife habitat. A well-managed forest can better withstand extreme disturbance events, which is critical when adjacent to the WUI and in forests that house threatened and endangered species (grizzly bears, lynx, wolverines, and bull trout). These species need a forest that can withstand and tolerate environmental change, managing these forests by decreasing tree densities and increasing the presence of large size class species will help in making the project area more tolerant to future disturbance events.

Stoltze will continue to support the Forest Service and their projects in any way we can. Our local national forests are essential to our livelihood and are our largest wood basket. We consider ourselves a partner of the USFS. Please continue to manage as many acres as possible commercially; with healthy forests come healthy water, wildlife, and recreation. Maintaining commercial management and an adequate supply of wood products for local mills will help ensure there is continued capacity to help the local forests achieve their goals and objectives on these projects now and into the future. Also, commercial management is our most effective means of reducing fuels across the landscape and within the WUI.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Jeff Whitlock
Forester
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