



Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

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Tim Gilloon
Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forest

Sent via email

Dear Mr. Gilloon,

Kootenai Tribe elders pass down the history of the beginning of time, which tells that the Kootenai people were created by Quilxka Nupika, the Supreme Being, and placed on earth to keep the Creator- Spirit's Covenant – to guard and keep the land forever. The Kootenai have never lost sight of their original purpose as guardians of the land.

Bands of the Kootenai or Ktunaxa Nation have inhabited Kootenai Territory, including portions of Idaho, Montana, Washington, British Columbia, and Alberta, since time immemorial. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (hereinafter "Kootenai Tribe") is one of two bands in the United States. Headquartered near Bonners Ferry, Idaho, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho possesses federally reserved fishing, hunting, and gathering rights within Kootenai Territory, as reserved in the Treaty of Hellgate of 1855.

The Tribe and the United States Forest Service (USFS) enjoy a close working relationship and often collaborate on issues of common concern to protect the fish, wildlife, and plant resources within our Territory. Management of these resources within Kootenai Territory is essential to fulfilling our Covenant with the Creator to keep and guard the land forever.

The Kootenai Tribe received a letter from the USFS Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) on February 2nd, 2024, which invited the Tribe to government-to-government consultation on the planning effort for the Katkee Fuels Project in the Bonners Ferry Ranger District.

The Katkee Fuels Project is located within the Ktunaxa Territory and hence is important to the Kootenai Tribe. The Tribe is pleased to see the Project moving forward for the reasons set forth in this letter. Forest management over the last century through fire suppression policies, overharvest and other unwise land management policies has led to federal forests in poor health. This includes the Project area, which is near the populated town of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. The Kootenai Tribal Council heeds the words of its elders, who say the forests in the Territory do not look the way they are supposed to look based on Ktunaxa oral histories, nor do they support the Territory and the Ktunaxa people in the manner they should. The Covenant must be honored to make the forests healthy once again. The Tribe believes the Katkee Fuels Project is a step in the

right direction. The Tribe supports the project's goals of reducing hazardous fuels and managing stands to increase forest health and resiliency in the project area.

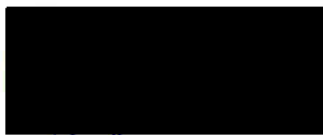
The Tribe invests significant time and energy on ecological restoration of National Forest lands in grizzly bear territory and is pleased to see the Forest Service working to take a proactive approach to restoring the project area that takes place in the Boulder Bear Management Unit, not only for the benefit of natural resources but also to protect public safety and human lives. If a fire were to occur in any of the adjacent drainages, it would be putting private residences and structures at greater risk.

In addition, the Tribe supports the proposed treatments in the two proposed old growth stands, knowing that the management practices will reduce hazardous fuels/understory densities and increase the resistance and resiliency to fire, insects, and diseases. The Tribe hopes USFS will continue to develop and implement ecological restoration projects like the Katkee Fuels Project on the IPNF for the benefit of all concerned.

The Tribe will provide additional comments when the EA is released in April 2024 regarding how Lynx, Wolverine, and White Bark Pine could be impacted in the higher elevation units. We feel the Scoping letter did not address these species enough or at all and hopefully will have more information regarding these species in the EA.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these issues/comments and participate in the Katkee Fuels Project process. The Tribe looks forward to working with USFS as the process continues.

Sincerely yours,



Jennifer Porter, Chairwoman

Kootenai Tribe of Idaho