



FLATHEAD ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE
Community. Innovation. Reliability.



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Re: Cooke City Fuels and Forest Health Project #57361

To Whom It May Concern,

Flathead Electric Cooperative would like to thank the Custer Gallatin National Forest for addressing the fire danger in southern Montana and for their continued collaboration with our member-owned cooperative as we strive toward common goals. As a fire mitigation project, the Cooke City Fuels and Forest Health Project will be important for both entities, the Cooke City area, Yellowstone National Park, Montana, Wyoming, and the entire region. In addition to helping prevent tree-to-power line contact, it will improve the power system resiliency for our 284 members in the Cooke City and Silver Gate communities.

Flathead Electric looks forward to complementing the project with our own upcoming project, which includes vegetation management, hazard tree removal and enhanced right of way throughout the Cooke City and Silver Gate communities, advanced metering infrastructure, and a battery energy storage system. Together, these projects aim to create a safer and more resilient grid.

We request that the Custer Gallatin National Forest consider wind throw and weather events when choosing which trees to remove, particularly around the Flathead Electric distribution line. The current twenty-foot right of way, with a ten-foot distance from the centerline, leaves minimal clearance beside the conductors on a ten-foot crossarm. This narrow space is not a large enough buffer to prevent trees from hitting the 14,400-volt conductor and potentially causing a catastrophe in windy conditions.

In addition, we ask the Custer Gallatin National Forest to please consider Flathead Electric's proposed battery energy storage system in the Kersey Lake Rd area of Cooke City during the NEPA review for this project. Completing the environmental impact studies in that area once instead of repeating them down the road will save time and resources. A Form 299 Application is soon forthcoming as Flathead Electric has obtained grant funding from the Department of Energy and looks forward to completing the battery resilience project along with the vegetation management as soon as possible.

Once again, we would like to stress our support for this project and appreciation for the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Sincerely,

Mark Johnson

General Manager

Flathead Electric Cooperative

